MOREHOUSE

The Life of Jessie W. Fell

History

A. M.

1914







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THE LIFE OF JESSE W. FELL

BY

FRANCES MILTON MOREHOUSE

A. B. University of Illinois, 1910

THESIS

ulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

STER OF ARTS

IN HISTORY

IN

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

May 28 19114

Frances Milton Mouhouse.

ENTITLED The Life of Jesse H. Fell.

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF Master of Sate.

Solon J. Buck.
In Charge of Major Work

Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in:

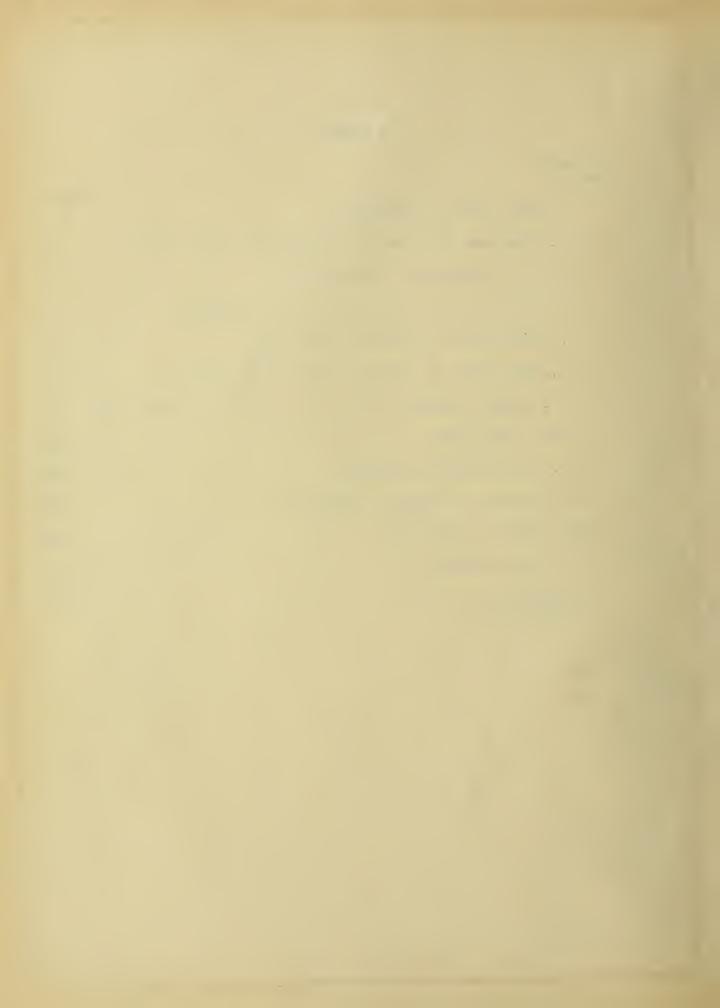
Committee on Final Examination



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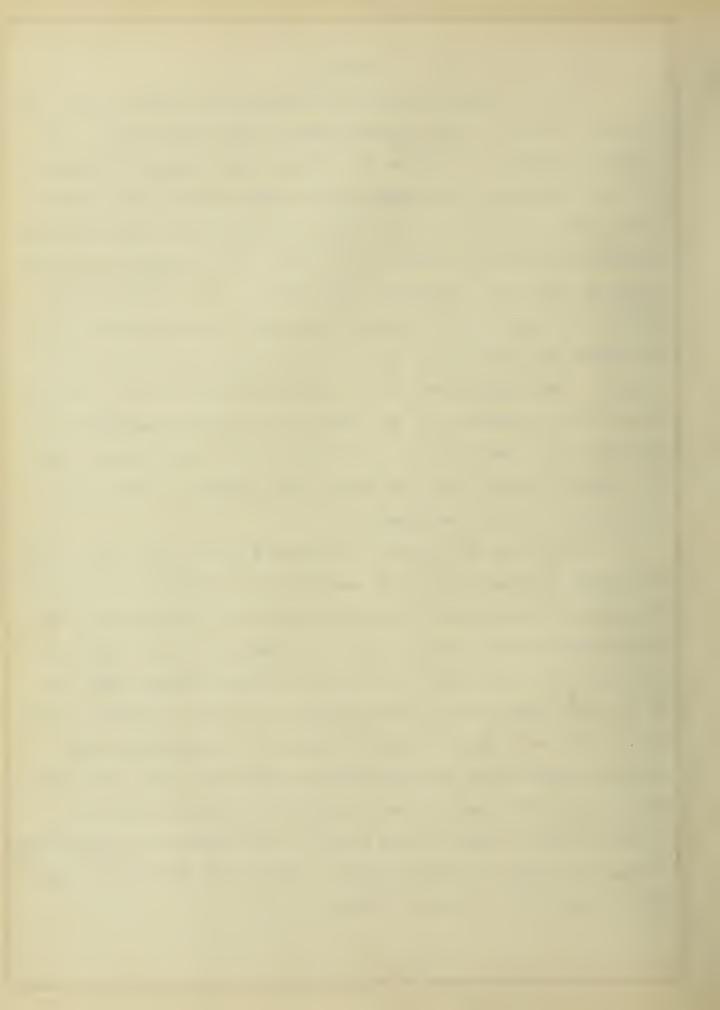
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Foreword.

There are but few men in any generation of men who see their lives in relation to the accomplishment of that generation. Few realize, although all profess to believe, that appraisal of worth must be according to the proportion of a man's part in the advance of his day; and that all honors and distinctions fall away from men when they stand before that bar of years, to be judged in the stark light of truth as to character and service. All men acknowledge this to be truth, but the men are rare indeed who apply it to their own lives, and make it the basis of their individual schedule of values. Many men believe in the immortality of the soul, but few can conceive themselves in any scheme of time which transcends the limits of their own lifetime; or content themselves to labor without reward, because they know that in the fullness of time all souls must find full conpensation.

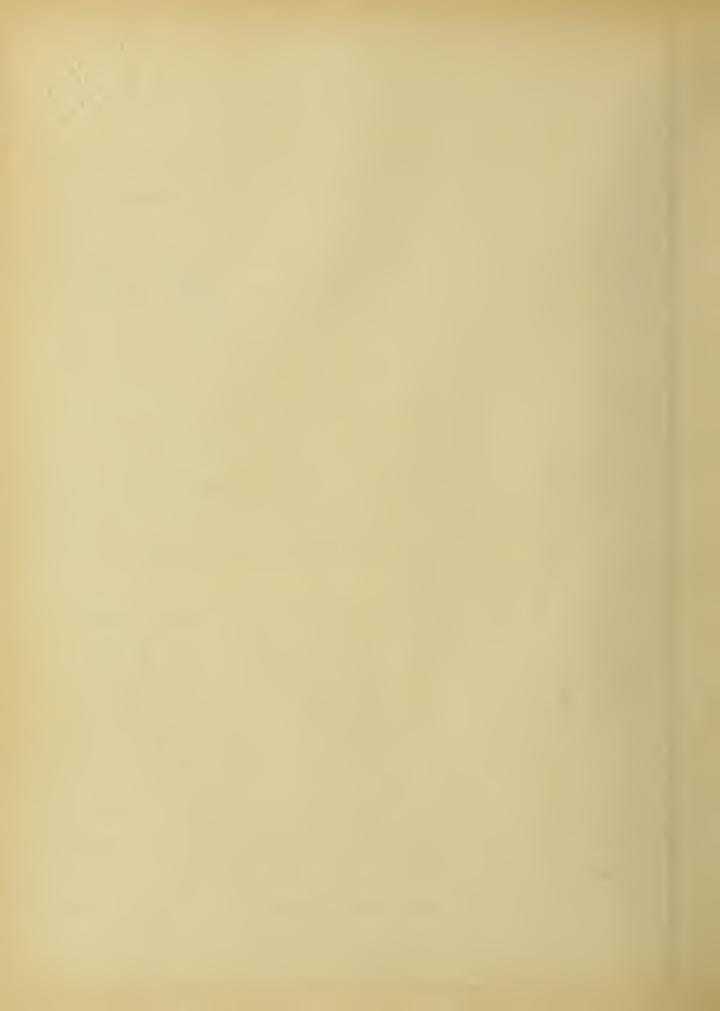
In writing the story of a man whose part in the life of his time might in itself bring him some meed of remembrance, I am nevertheless most anxious that this rare quality of indifference to the little rewards that men might give, of steadfastness to ideals not generally held in his day, of faith in ultimate things, stand out as the true reason for his being brought as fully as possible before men. Here was a man who steadily ignored or refused honor and fame, who despised no quiet and unrecognized labor for a just cause, who was not turned aside from his steady aim by the pressure of circumstance; in short, whose belief in the future was interpreted in all the doings of his busy life. This is the sufficient reason for writing a life of Jesse W. Fell.



Early Years (1808-1836)

The Fell farm in New Garden Township, Chester county, Pennsylvania, lay mainly upon a high ridge, which was known by the Indian name of Touchkenamon, or Fire Brand Hill. It was a region rich in historical associations, not far from Brandywine battlefield. The house was built of stone, and in later years was remodeled into a handsome country residence. Here Jesse W. Fell was born, on November 10, 1808. His parents were Friends, of ancient and honorable English lineage, but of limited means and simple tastes. His father was a hatter, his mother a preacher of the Hicksites. Because he had much skill in song, his father, when he later united with the Methodists, became a choir leader; and he sometimes turned his resonant speaking voice to account in crying sales. There was a large family; Jesse, named for his father, was the third child.

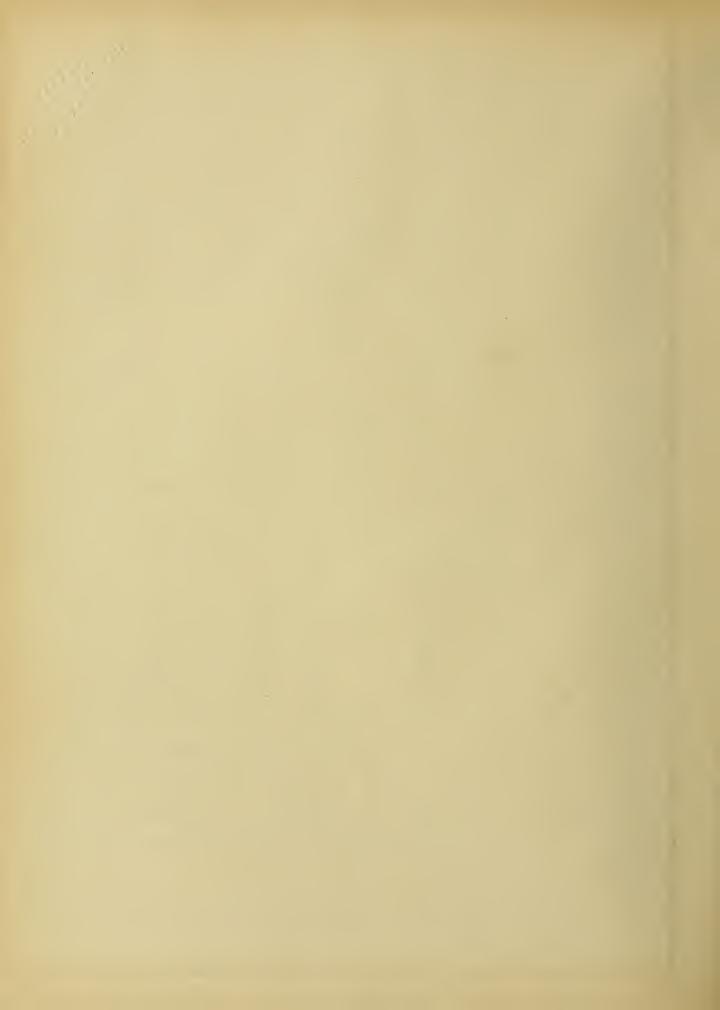
When he was eight years old, the family moved to another town in New Britain Township, and subsequently to Downington, a town in Chester County. In the country Jesse attended, with his brothers and sisters, the neighborhood "Subscription Schools" maintained among the Friends of Pennsylvania; for there were then no public schools in the state. These schools, within the limited scope of their courses of study, were usually good, and the Fell children received a solid foundation in the elementary subjects. The elder brothers were apprenticed, upon reaching the proper age, to a blacksmith and a wheelwright respectively. As Jesse was not a robust lad, the parents and other relatives thought it best to



apprentice him to a tailor, and cast about for a skilful master who might teach him this trade. But the boy himself objected so strenuously that the plan was abandoned. He "would learn a better business," he declared; and the parents, not wishing to coerce him, waited for some definite talent or liking to appear, which might guide their son in deciding upon his vocation. As yet the boy had no definite plan, save that of becoming wiser than he was. He wanted to go to some school that would teach him more than the country subscription schools offered.

Joshua Hoopes conducted a boarding school for boys in Downington at that time, which was the best school in that part of Pennsylvania. It was remarkable in that, at a time when the classics formed the core of instruction in almost all secondary schools, it emphasized the natural sciences. The master was an enthusiastic botanist, a popular lecturer on astronomy, and sufficiently adept at mathematics to win the admiration of the community. These subjects he had been able to master by dint of systematic application of his really brilliant mind to printed treatises, and by giving rein to an originality which the higher schools of those days did not greatly encourage. Free from the traditions of schools, this village schoolmaster gave to his boys a type of education destined to become popular long afterward, but practically unknown to his own day. He taught of plants and animals, of husbandry and astronomy, of literature and mathematics, with a wealth of practical application that linked books with life and study with pleasure.

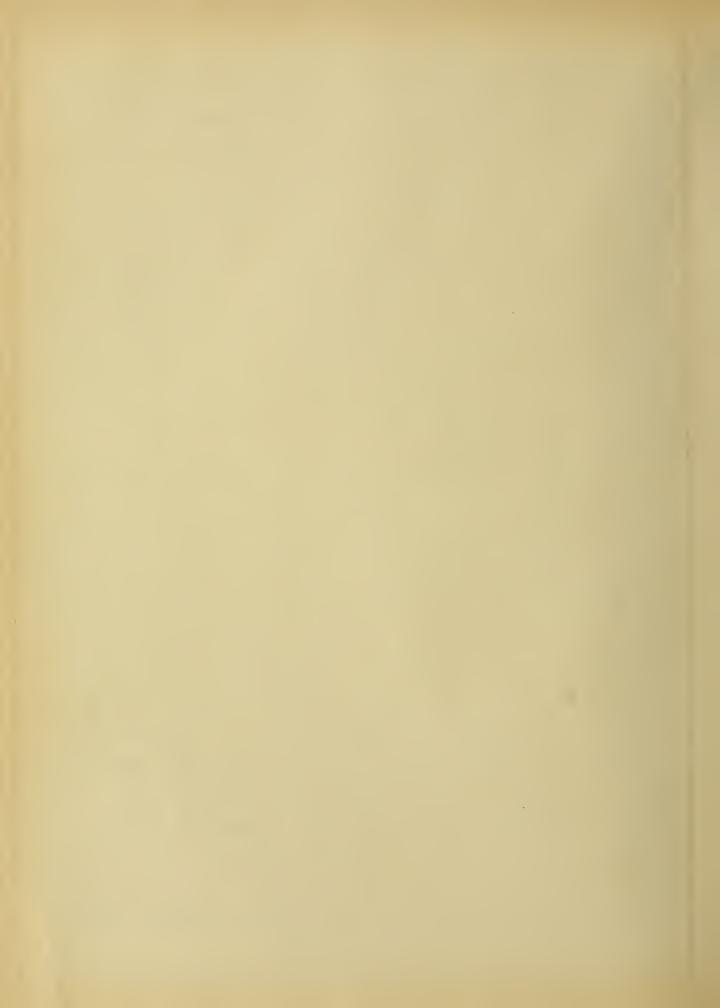
Jesse Fell wanted to attend this school, but lacked funds.



He applied for admission, however, offering to pay for his tuition by any kind of work that he could do. An arrangement was made by which Jesse was to work in the master's kitch-garden, and help about the house, in return for his board and tuition. The work was hard, but not unpleasant. His master introduced him to the joy of intelligent gardening, took him for long tramps in the woods, and allowed him the freedom of his library. The books were a mine of riches to the boy, and Joshua Hoopes' enthusiastic love of plant life stirred to response a kindred feeling in the heart of his pupil There grew out of this pleasant period in the life of the boy that love of trees which, in the man grown, was to give so richly to the prairies of the West. 1

That West continually called him. The idea of going into the new country beyond the mountains grew in him during the two years of his stay at Joshua Hoopes' school. When he had finished the course of study, Friend Hoopes wished him to enter into a partnership with him in a vineyard enterprise which he was then planning. Jesse Fell declined, not being willing yet to relinquish his dreams of a larger career in a new country; and Friend Hoopes abandoned the scheme "for want of a suitable partner." To further his plan of going West, Fell taught school for a period of about two years, from 1826 to 1828. The schools he taught were near his home, at Buckingham, Colerain, Brown's and Little Britain. As he understood surveying and other branches of higher mathematics, he was able to command a higher salary than was paid to most teachers, who received two dollars per quarter in cash. In the intervals

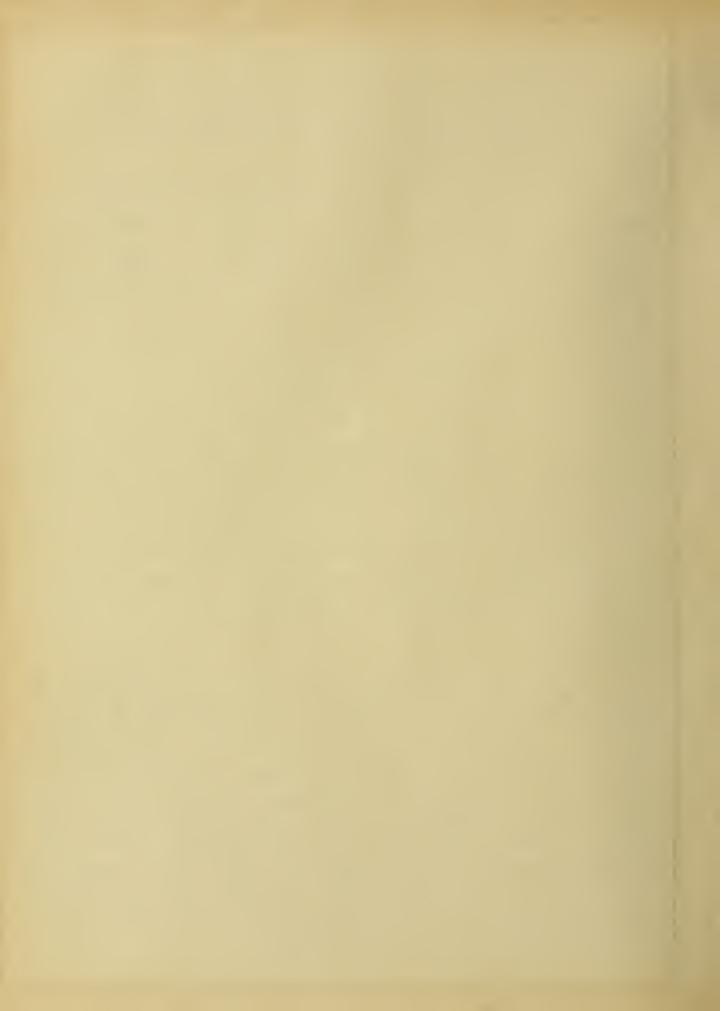
¹⁾ Richard Edwards, Jesse W. Fell, 3. History of Chester County, Pennsylvania, article "Joshua Hoopes."



of teaching he "kept store" for Issachar Price of Callaghersville, while that country merchant was away crying sales; and in all his spare time he was reading diligently.

this two years of teaching was a period of growth and development for the tall, blue-eyed Quaker boy. He tested his powers, supplemented his knowledge, enlarged his interests. Although he later considered himself "but an indifferent pedagogue," he was considered very efficient by those who employed him, except at Colerain. This was an extremely rigid Presbyterian community, with a school in which the New Testament had been the sole test in reading for a long time. Mr. Fell suggested that his pupils bring other books that the reading might be varied, whereupon he was denounced from the local pulpit as a Hicksite who had "expelled the Bible from his school." Without denying the first part of this charge, which was true, Jesse Fell asked that the second accusation might be inquired into officially, and when it was repeated without investigation, he closed the school, very hurt and very indignant.

It was while teaching that Jesse Fell had his first serious conflict with the will of another, and his first great lesson in the use of force and diplomacy. A school bully, larger than himself, had defied him, and had been whipped. After the whipping he administered a lecture, so tinctured with kindness and well-directed flattery - "what all men like if skilfully applied" said Mr. Fell in telling afterward of this experience - that the boy resolved to reform his ways. He became later a Methodist Episcopal minister of fine character and widespread influence.



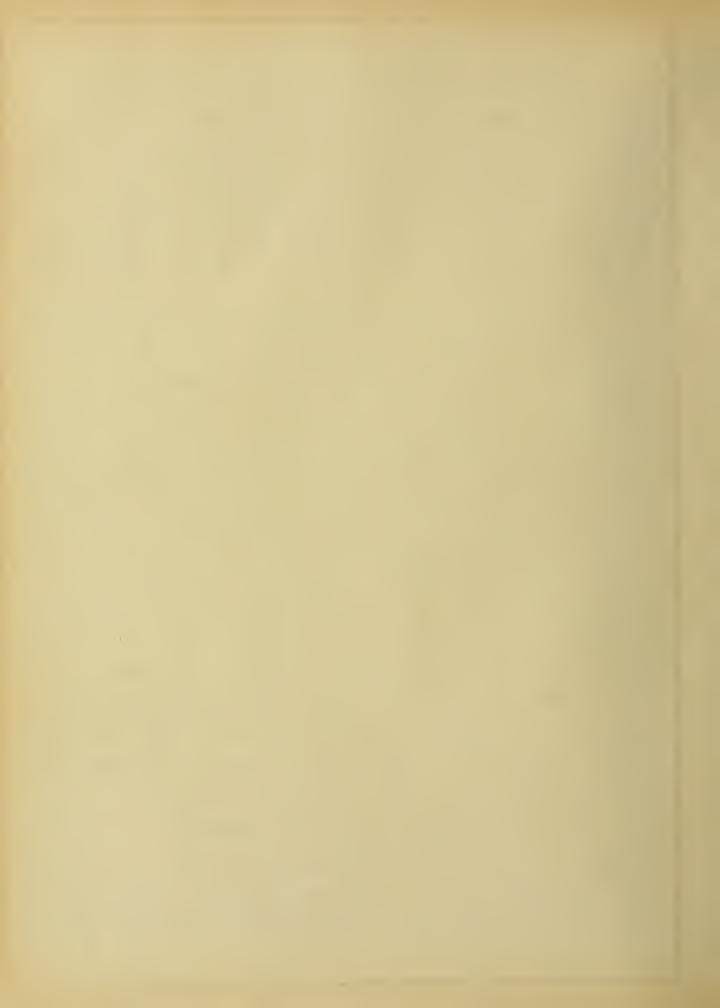
At this time, also, Fell began to speak in public, and especially to debate whenever opportunity offered. At the little country school-houses there were held political debates, as well as other neighborhood meetings; and at these debates Fell, when he was only seventeen years of age, made a name for himself as a speaker, particularly upon that subject so dear to the Pennsylvanian, the tariff.

In the fall of 1828, having saved a little money and borrowed more from his brother Joshua, Jesse Fell started for the West.

He was twenty years of age, still slight and rather frail in physique, and unacquainted with the world. He was going to seek his fortune in an unknown country, with no definite trade or profession as an asset. His family, with a helpful confidence in his ability to do what he wishes to do, bade him godspeed. He spent the last night before starting for the West with an old friend, R. Henry Carter, with whom he talked far into the night, of old days and days to come. In the morning he set out for Pittsburgh. A young man by the name of Drummond, from Washington, started with him, but soon became discouraged and returned to his home. 1

This first stage of the journey was accomplished on foot, except for a few miles at the end, when, very footsore, Fell wavered in his resolve not to spend his money until he was started upon the farther trip. He entered Pittsburgh on the deck of a little canal boat. This city was then the clearing-house of all western enterprise, the gateway to the new land, and a center for securing

¹⁾ R. Henry Carter to E. J. Lewis, March 8, 1887. Grace Hurwood to Fannie Fell, March 16, 1913. From notes of facts related to Miss Hurwood by Mr. Fell. Franklin Price in the Fell Memorial, pp. 9-10.

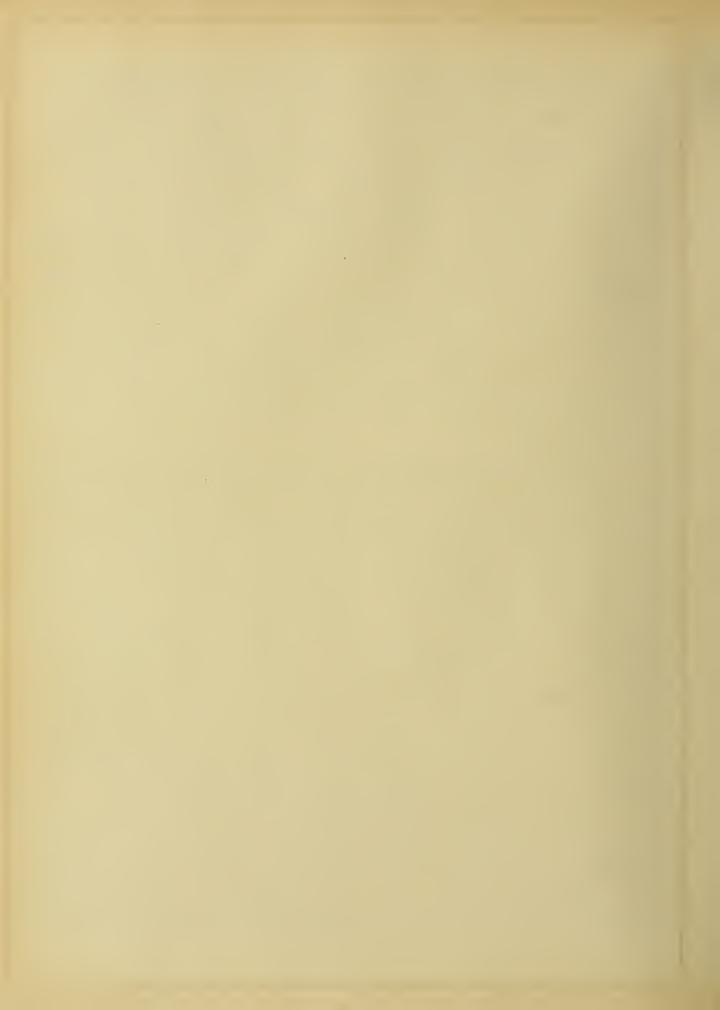


employment. Here Jesse Fell met a Mr. Reese, who employed him as a bookagent. He was to take orders for Malte Brun's Geography, Rollin's Ancient History, Josephus, and one other book, the name of which Mr. Fell afterward forgot. Armed with this means of defraying expenses, he boarded a steamer for Wheeling, where he soon fell in with a certain Mr. Howell, the publisher of The Eclectic Observer. Mr. Howell took a liking to the young Quaker, and wished to interest him in his paper. This was a journal of protest against slavery, capital punishment, and any other institution which, in the eyes of the editor, deserved cansure. Jesse Fell again decided against the half-gods; he was bound for the newer and greater West.

While canvassing Wheeling, however, he found time to write his first contribution to a periodical. The subject was one upon which he had often grown eloquent back in the country-school debates of Chester County - "The Abolition of Imprisonment for Debt."

Mr. Howells was delighted with its force and fervor. Here was material worth working - what an abolitionist he would make! He offered him an assistant editorship. But Jesse Fell declined and went on with his own plans. They carried him, with his books, over the National Road, opened at that time as far as Zanesville. He met interesting people on the road, notably the Hon. Benjamin Ruggles, United States senator from Ohio from 1815 to 1833.

But the people along the National Road were too busily engaged inmaking homes in the wilderness, to have a great thirst for Josephus and Rollin. Mr. Fell perceived that the business of selling books was not likely to give him very speedy or consider-



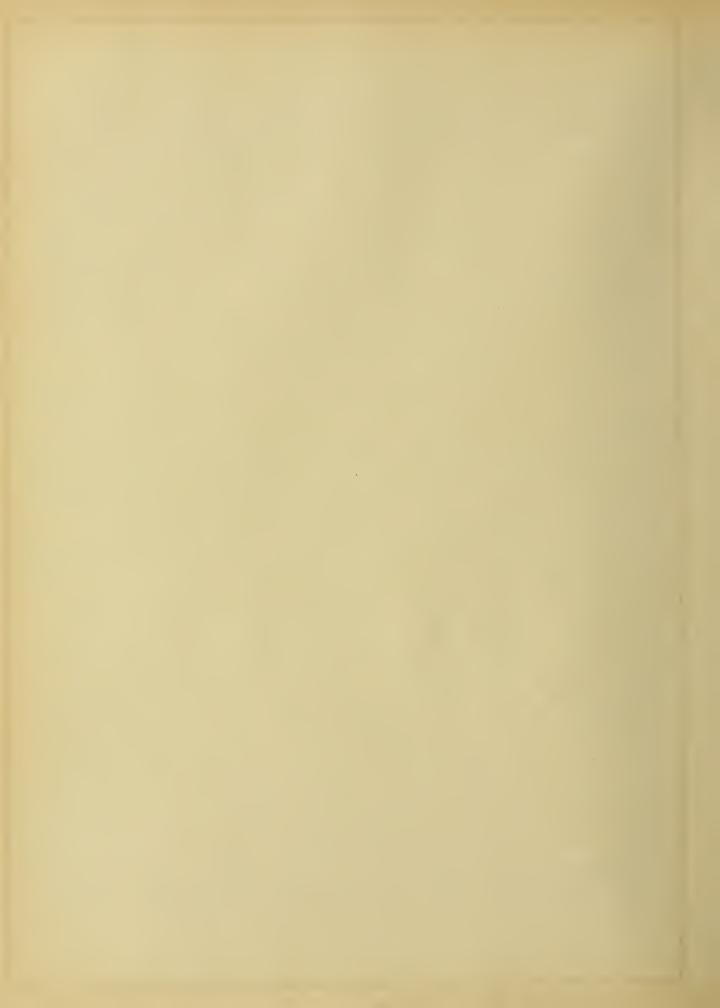
able help in winning his way to the West. An illness took his small savings. Consequently, as the winter of 1829-30 drew near, he made his way back to Wheeling, where he spent the cold months in Mr. Howell's office, setting type, writing for The Eclectic Observer, and learning the tricks of a literary trade. At this time he asked his father for money to invest in a part interest in The Amulet, for which he had been agent. Very fortunately, as he himself said afterward, his father was not able to help him at the time, and the idea of this partnership was given up.

When the spring returned, he set off again with his books under his arm, up the Ohio and to the West, through the counties of Jefferson and Columbiana (where were people of his own religious faith, upon whose friendly interest he might confidently depend), and back to Pittsburgh, the headquarters of his book house.

Throughout the journey he kept a notebook, but this was later lost. The uncertain fortunes of a traveling agent, his illness of a year before, and the knowledge of the world which his experience was giving him, crystalized what had before been but a vague ambition, into a settled determination. He would prepare himself for a profession, which in those days even more surely than at the present time, led to honor, influence and power. He would be a lawyer. 1

With this resolution in mind, but with his agent's paraphernalia still in hand, he turned his face westward in the spring of 1830. He had gone as far as Steubenville when the event occurred

¹⁾ Elwood Brown to Jesse W. Fell, Dec. 20, 1829. Jesse Fell to his son, Jesse W. Fell, Jan. 16, 1830. Hannah Fell (an aunt) and Rebecca Fell (his mother) to Fell, Feb. 6, 1830.



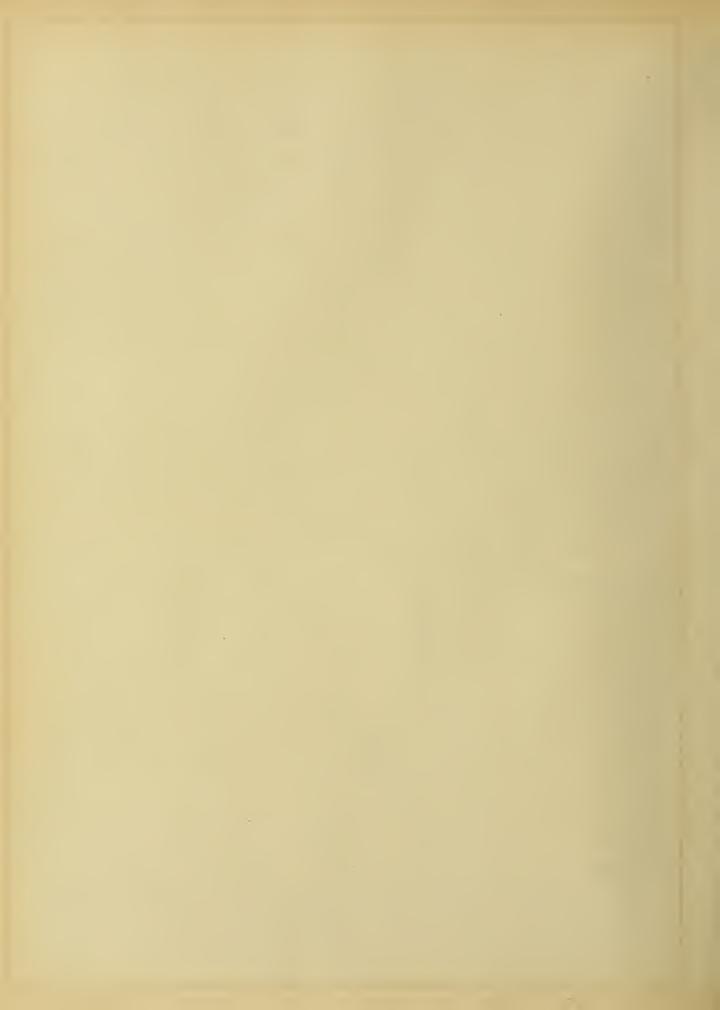
which was to prove the means of accomplishing his desire. Walking along the sidewalk, with an agent's ready eye for a possible buyer he espied a young man busily chopping wood. He looked not averse to good reading, and the young Quaker approached him in the interests of Josephus, Rollin, and Fell. But the woodchopper was as poor as Fell himself, and the two, finding a common interest in their common situation, fell to discussing ways and means and prospects. The woodchopper was studying law, he said, in the office of a local firm of excellent reputation. He would like to buy books, but needed every cent he could make for bare living expenses. After he had been admitted to the bar, he was to pay for his tuition; and then he would need all surplus funds for his law library. There was a place for one more student with Stokeley and Marsh, and he would introduce Fell to the firm.

Pell soon made arrangements for his law course. He was to pay his way in part by doing office work for the firm, and partly by such odd jobs as he might find to do in that frontier community, where there was usually work for all. His two elder brothers helped him from time to time as their limited means permitted.

Messrs. Stokeley and Narsh soon came to value him very highly, while he regarded both the partners with the greatest affection.

About a year after beginning his studies in their office, he made a visit to his old home, and was present at the wedding of his brother Joshua, on January 16, 1831. The wedding took place at Old Kennett

¹⁾ Fell to Jesse Fell, June 26, 1830. The story as told in Edwards' Jesse W. Fell implies that the idea of becoming a lawyer did not occur to Fell until the time of his interview with the woodchopper. But a letter to his parents, dated June 6, 1830, indicates that the idea had been in his head from some time; while Franklin Price states (Fell Memorial, 9) that he had read Blackstone while still in Chester County.

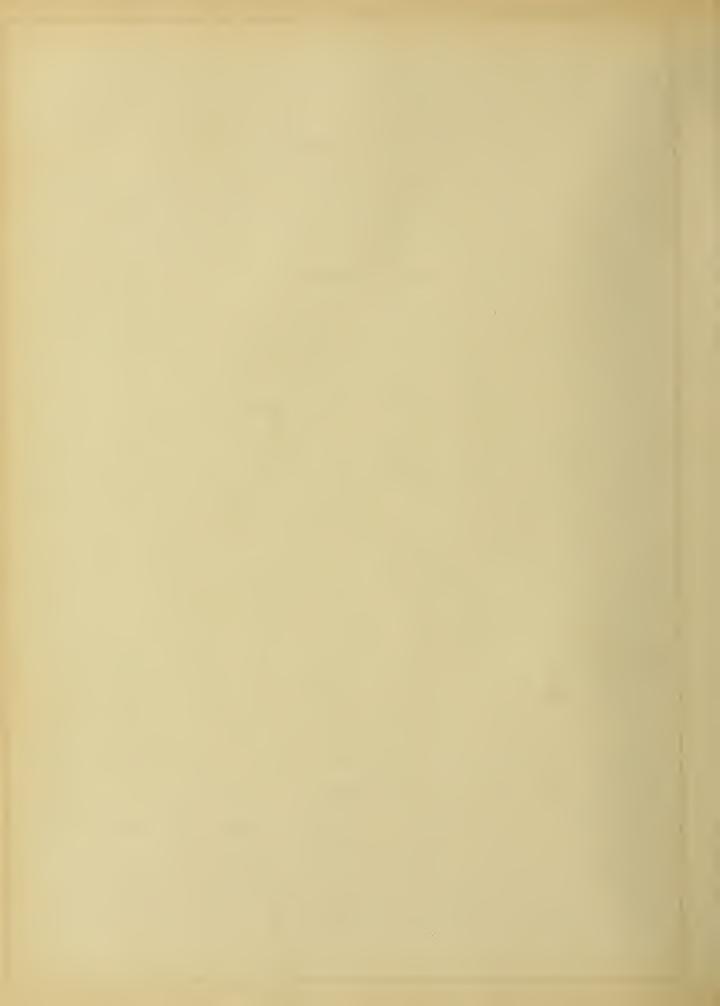


Meeting House in Chester County, and Jesse read the certificate.

On the return journey his father brought him as far as Shippenburg,
a point some forty miles west of Harrisburg.

For another year the law lessons in the office of Stokeley and Marsh went on. The young men in the office had practice in public speaking, for they were eligible to membership in The Forum, a society whose object was the improvement of its members "in speaking and general culture." Jesse Fell made his first public speech before this body, upon his old theme of The Abolition of Imprisonment for Debt. The presiding officer, a Mr. Wright, who had been a congressman and was later a judge, praised his speech, and the law student tried again. Mr. Stokely was a local leader in the ranks of the Whigs, who were at that time actively opposing the pretensions of Jackson. There were innumerable stump speeches to be made, and Mr. Stokely gave to Jesse Fell his share in the work. The younger man conceived a great admiration for Henry Clay, which guided his political opinions and activities so long as Clay lived. A youth working in Trumbull's bookstore, and at that time a Clay enthusiast with the rest, became his friend. This boy was Edwin M. Stanton, afterward Secretary of War under Lincoln.

The fall of 1832, when Jesse Fell was preparing for his bar examination, was an especially busy season. He took these examinations, with three other aspirants, on October 1, passed them successfully, was admitted, and started on foot for the West about a fortnight later. It was a somewhat risky enterprise, for the payment of debts took most of his available money leaving little for the outfit and for traveling expenses. His family helped him



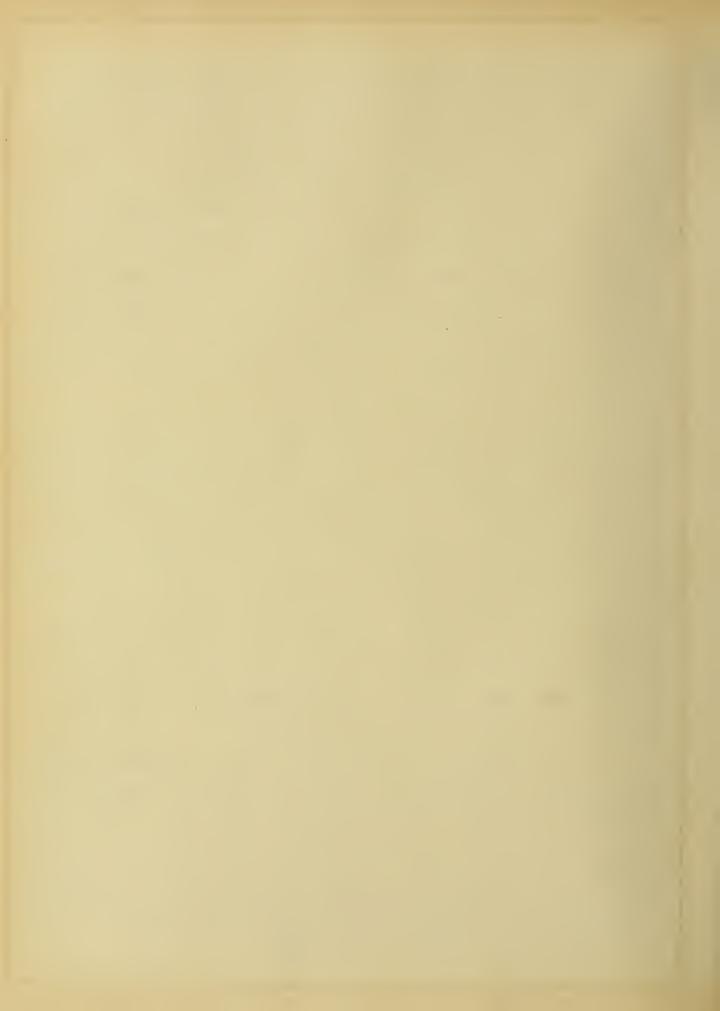
as they could, but this was not much. Mr. Marsh, regretting to lose a youth who gave so great promise, had offered him a partnership if he would stay with him, his partnership with Mr. Stokely having recently been dissolved. Again he chose to answer the call of the ultimate mission. His plan was to travel through parts of Ohio which he had not yet visited, in Indiana, and in Illinois. He seems not to have thought of settling at once, as he suggested to his father at the time that he might "return by steamboat from St. Louis, as this may be done with little expense." He seems also to have left with Mr. Marsh the idea of possibly returning to enter into a partnership at a later time.

Traveling on foot through Ohio and Indiana, Mr. Fell came to eastern Illinois in November, 1832. The presidential election had been held the day before he entered the state. At Danville, he met Judge McRoberts, a prominent citizen of those days, who told him of Bloomington, a village then but lately founded. Its location, said Judge McRoberts, was good, and he considered it a "coming" town. In Decatur, the next considerable town which Fell visited, this report of Bloomington was repeated. At Jacksonville, on the 21st, Judges Lockwood and Smith made out for him his certificate of admission to the bar in Illinois.²

In Springfield Fell was to talk to John T. Stuart, to whom he had letters of introduction, and whose advice he wished before settling in any place. Very weary and footsore, he arrived in the city which was afterward to be the capital of Illinois at sunset of

2) The certificate is among the Fell MSS.

¹⁾ Fell to some member of his family, Sept. 23, 1832. Certificate of admission to Ohio bar, dated Oct. 13, 1832. James Ross Wells, clerk. Jesse or Rebecca Fell to Fell, Sept. 2, 1832.



a warm day in late November. John Todd Stuart was sitting before the door of his house when Fell approached, carrying the stout stick and carpet-bag which were his worldly possessions at that time. Many young men so accounted trod the streets of the new cities of the West in those days, and Stuart, with a characteristic friendliness, spoke cordially to this newcomer and asked him what he might do for him. Fell answered that he was looking for John T. Stuart, and would like to be directed to his house. Upon learning that he was speaking to Mr. Stuart, Fell produced a letter from one of Stuart's clients in Philadelphia, introducing the Pennsylvanian and asking the favor of advice and help for him. The two sat down then and there to discuss the question of location and opportunity. 1

Mr. Stuart spoke especially, as had Fell's previous advisors, of the new county of McLean, lately erected by the legislature, and its county seat of Bloomington. It was, he said, a very new town, and he was quite sure there was no lawyer there as yet. With the quick decision which was one of his characteristics, Fell determined to go at once to Bloomington, and stood up to depart. Stuart invited him to stay the night, but so eager was Fell to reach the place to which he had decided to go, that he declined the proffered rest and entertainment, and trudged that night for many miles on his way to Bloomington. At New Salem, pausing for food and rest, he first heard the name of Abraham Lincoln, when the townspeople told him of the company they had sent to the Black Hawk war. From there he went to Pekin, and then on, sixteen miles further, to

¹⁾ These facts were related to me by Judge James Ewing of Bloomington, Dec. 4, 1912. Mr. Stuart had himself told them to Judge Ewing. See also, Fell to David Davis, Dec. 15, 1885.



Dillon, since called Delavan, in Tazewell County. Here he stopped to visit at the home of William Brown, members of whose family he had known in Pennsylvania. He was almost without money, but came "carrying a knapsack and feeling as big as King Solomon in all his glory," and full of that buoyancy and faith in the future that made him both representative and leader in his day and place.

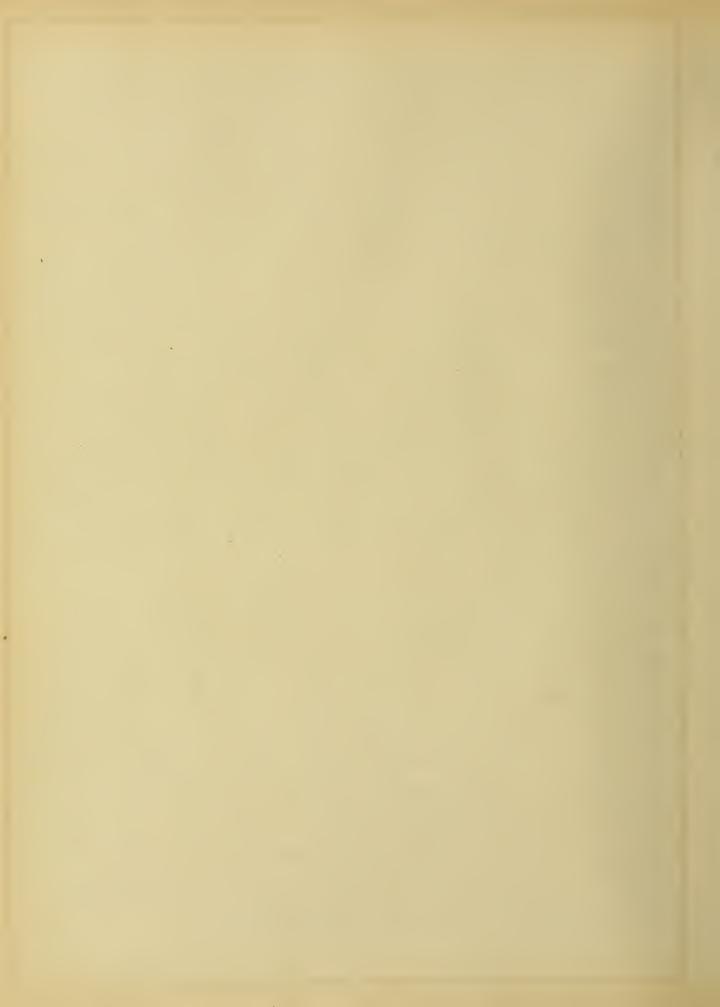
William Evans built the first house in Bloomington in 1826.

Four years later, on December 25, 1830, McLean County was created.

The first sale of town lots was on July 4, 1831. At the close of 1832 the town numbered about 100 people, while the neighboring settlement of Blooming Grove had fully 250. General Gridley, lately returned from the Black Hawk War, was the leading citizen. When Jesse Fell arrived, William Evans had but lately sold his house to James Allin, who opened a store for it, and laid out the town in lots. There was no resident clergyman at that time, no newspaper, and no lawyer.

Fell's survey of the situation satisfied him that there existed a favorable opening for him, and he returned to Delavan, where William Brown had offered him employment for the winter as a tutor to his children. Mr. Brown was a great man of his locality - a man who had glass panes in the windows of his cabin, whose family had "come West" in a carriage, and who employed a teacher to instructhis children. He had brought his family from Pennsylvania in 1828. Later, he was known through his locality as "Joseph," because in a year of crop-failure he had sold his good crop of corn for a dollar a bushel, the regular price of grain in early days in Illinois.

¹⁾ Joshua Brown to E. J. Lewis, December, 1896.



People for twenty miles around came to him for food and seed. His home was a social center. From it the young people started on long rides to lectures or parties at Pekin or at distant farmhouses and settlements. The eldest son, Joshua, was the leading spirit among the younger men. Eliza, the eldest of the sisters, was a girl of rare loveliness and ability, whose early death a few years later brought great sorrow to the whole neighborhood. The children of two other families attended Jesse Fell's classes that winter. In the Brown home he found congenial friends, encouragement and good counsel, as well as the material help he then needed.

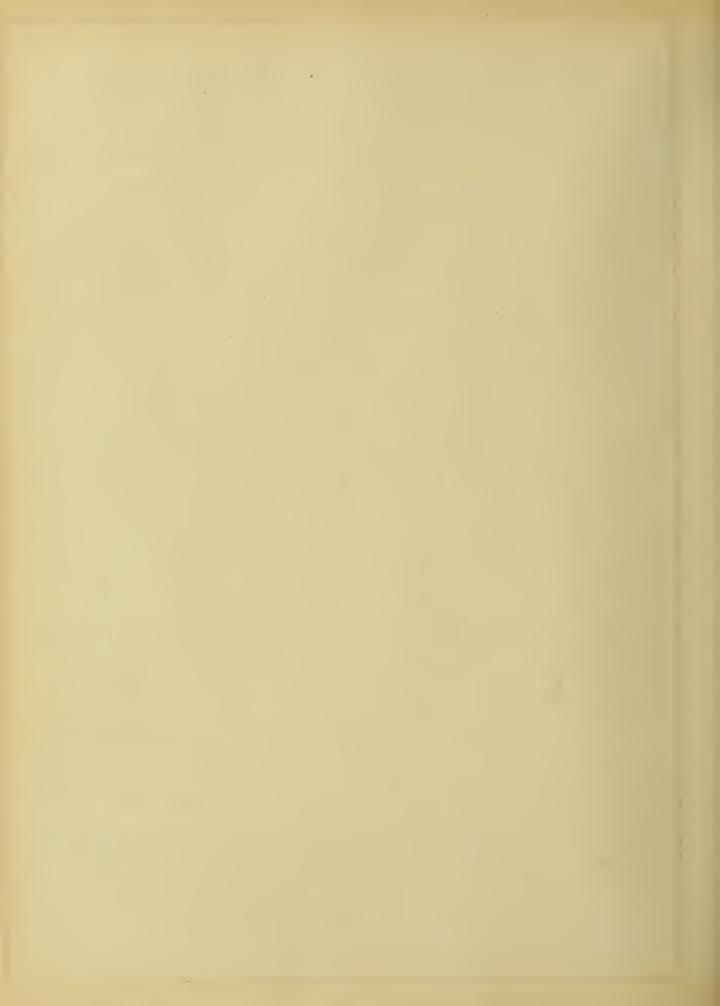
When the spring came he went back to Bloomington, and opened his office in a small brick building at the northeast corner of Main and Front streets. The small legal library, which Mr. Marsh had agreed to send him when he was settled, to be paid for when practice gave him means, arrived during the spring, after a long journey down the Ohio and up the Mississippi and the Illinois to Pekin, whence it was carted overland to Bloomington. Fell boarded with James Allen, who, in addition to his other activities, kept the only inn of the locality, at what came afterward to be known as "the old Stipp place."

With the growth of population and the inevitable troubles in adjusting titles and claims to lands, there came legal business in plenty to Bloomington's first lawyer.² On the second of May,

¹⁾ E. M. Prince, "Hester Vernon (Brown) Fell," in Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of McLean County, II: 1024-27.

2) John T. Stuart told Judge James Ewing that when he attended court in Bloomington six months after Fell had settled there, that Fell told him he was worth about \$60,000 above all debts. The statement is manifestly inaccurate, probably inthe matter of the time of the occurrence; but it gives an idea of the rapidity with which fortunes were built up in the prosperous days of the early land-exchange.

The first professional card used by Mr. Fell gives as references



1833, he made his initial appearance in an Illinois courtroom.

This was at the third session of the Circuit Court in McLean

County; which sat for three days, and disposed of several cases.

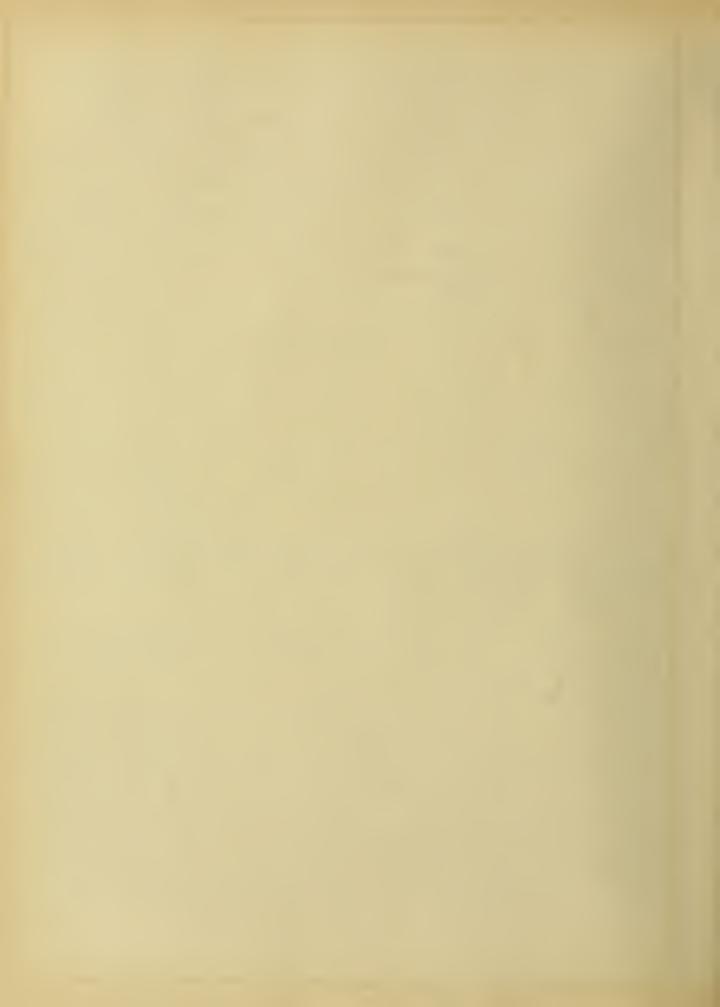
Fell was attorney in two of these cases, and secured favorable judgment in both by default. At the next session, in September, he had a number of cases, which he managed so well that his position and clientels were henceforth assured.

John T. Stuart continued to be his friend, furnishing him letters of introduction and recommending him to clients. He became known as a good judge of land, and located innumerable farms for his clients, making the entries at the land office at Danville. Before long he began to acquire land for himself, and to exhibit the outward and visible signs of prosperity. He bought his first horse, McLean, on which he took those long night rides to Danville,

the following lawyers: Richard Dorsey, Baltimore; William Dorsey, Richard Sturgeon and Amos Jeans, Philadelphia; William P. Dixon, New York; Willis Hall, Albany, New York; D. B. Leight and Company, Louisville; Hon. John C. Wright and Hon. Samuel Stokeley, Ohio; and Hon. John T. Stuart, Illinois.

1) The first sesson of Circuit Court in McLean County was held Sept. 22, 1831, at Mr. Allen's house, but with no docket; at the second, held Sept. 27, 1832, the jury tried one appealed case, dismissed several on the docket and continued one. Lewis Life, 21. Fell to his parents, Nov. 17, 1833.

An incident related by Fell to Miss Grace Hurwood, and repeated from her notes in the letter of March 16, 1913, referred to elsewhere, goes to show that although a Quaker, Fell was not averse to defending himself in traditional ways. He and another young lawyer became engaged in an altercation in which his opponent gave him the lie. "I told him that would have to be settled outside the courtroom, so when court adjourned, we promptly went out to settle it in the time-honored way. Neither of us gained much advantage over the other, as while he was the stronger, I was the quicker, and we were parted before we could finish. We had fought hard enough however to be willing to shake hands. In the morning we were indicted for fighting 'to the disturbance and alarm of the people.' My defense was that nobody was at all alarmed, much to Lincoln's amusement, and the indictment was quashed."

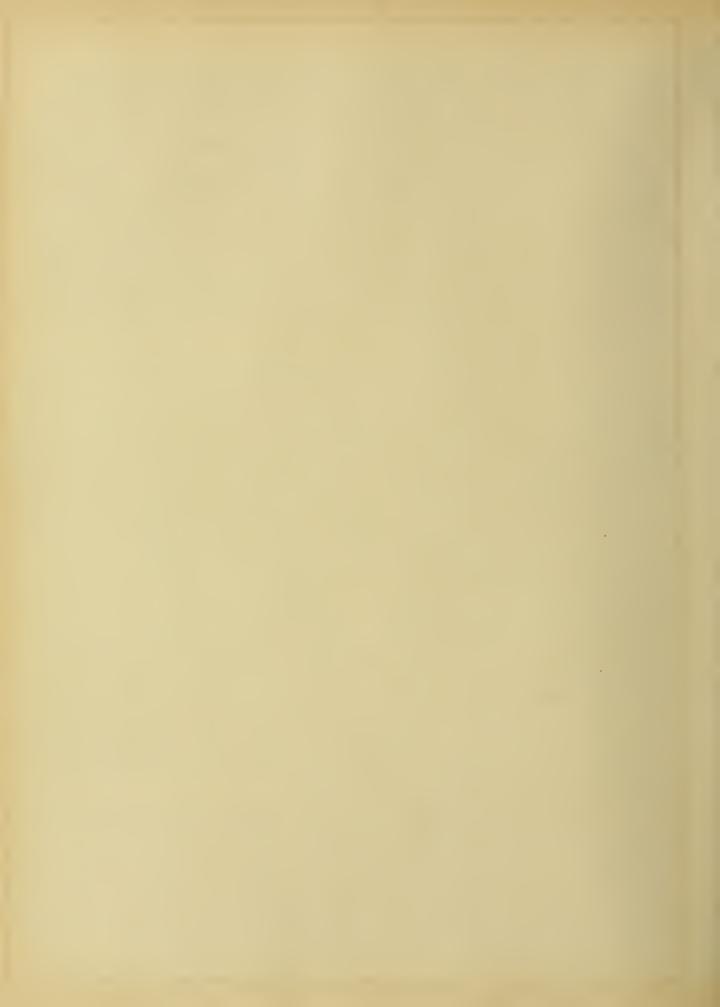


Springfield, Urbana and Vandalia, that soon began to tell sadly upon his health. His restless energy responded to the insistent demands of a growing, changing, developing country. Some prophetic idea of its possibilities, and much boyish eagerness to realize his dreams speedily, urged him to an activity that was the continual wonder of all his friends. He was interested in everything that promised to help the country of his adoption, and developed early that loyalty to Bloomington and to McLean County which characterized him to do much that he did.

An instance of this loyalty to Bloomington occurred early in his career. In 1834 an effort was made to take from McLean County its territory west of the third principal meridian, and add it to Tazewell County. As this would have made the western boundary line of McLean County scarecely eight miles from Bloomington, thus changing its central located to a western one, and so furnishing a possible reason for removing the county seat to another town at some future time, Mr. Fell opposed the movement valiantly from the first. Fearing that its friends might push the measure through the legislature if that body were left unguarded, he spent most of the winter of 1834-5 in Vandalia, where his efforts and influence were such that the measure failed of realization. McLean County owes to him, consequently, and to those who worked with him, the distinction of being the largest county in the state. 1

The winter in Vandalia had other results than the preservation of the territorial integrity of McLean County. John T. Stuart of Springfield, and Abraham Lincoln of New Salem, were both at that time members of the legislature from Sangamon County. The two men roomed

1) Fell to David Davis, Dec. 15, 1885. Lewis Life, 23.



together, and Jesse Fell lived at the same house. These men were very interesting to the Easterner, who noted the sharp contrast between Stuart's attractive person and polished manners and Lincoln's big-boned, angular, wrinkled face and homely ways. Stuart introduced Fell to Lincoln, and the two became almost at once great friends, for there was in them a fundamental likeness that transcended all differences of creed or training or destiny. The friendship of Stuart, Lincoln and Fell lasted to the death of the president in 1865. In 1838, when Stuart was a candidate for Congress against Stephen A. Douglas, both Fell and Lincoln exerted themselves to the utmost to secure his election. Douglas and Fell also, in spite of the vigorous opposition of the latter on this and other occasions, were good friends, serving each other in many ways with the greatest cordiality.

inexperience, to have become a leading citizen. This was partly due, of course, to thefact that he was Bloomington's first regularly trained and capable lawyer; but it must also have been largely owing to innate qualities of leadership and to that singular charm and adaptability to which many of his generation have borne witness. In 1835, Benjamin Mills wrote to him asking for support for his candidacy to represent the third Congressional district in the next Congress. He interested himself in securing a mail route from Bloomington to Springfield, concerning which Gov. Joseph Duncan wrote encouragingly inthe spring of 1834. He was in requisition for Fourth of July orations, citizens' mass meetings and debating-

¹⁾ Fell to Lincoln, July 20, 1838. Lincoln to Fell, about July 25, 1838. Douglas to Fell, March 21, 1844. Herndon, Lincoln, III: 442-445.



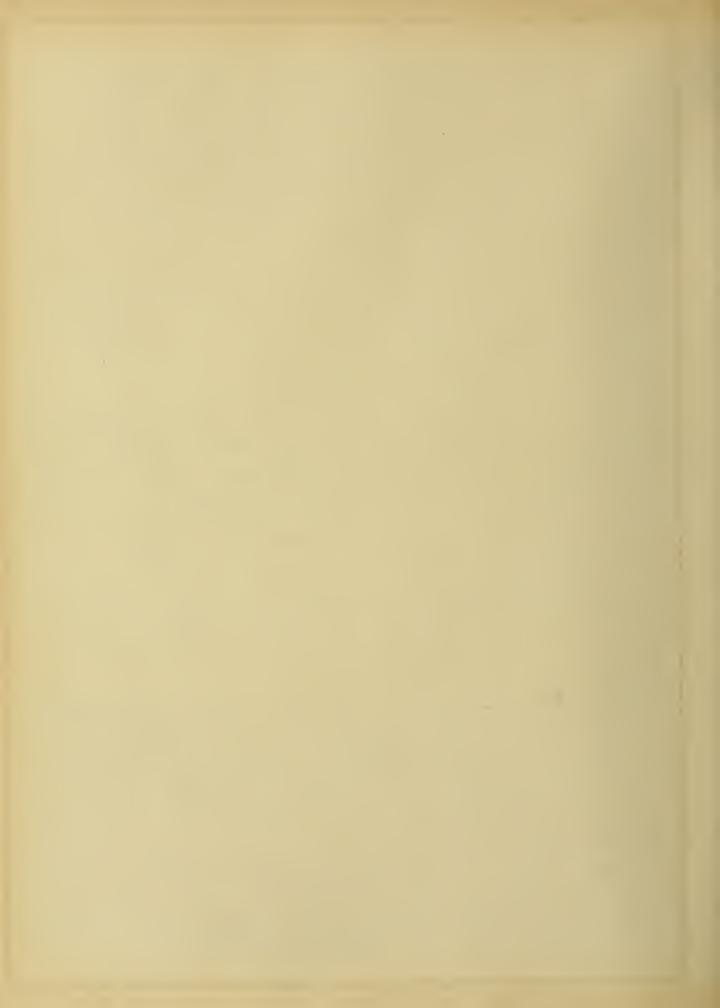
clubs. In 1834 he became, by appointment, commissioner of school lands for McLean County. The county records of that and the succeeding year show many mortgages which he drew up, both for town lots and for farms, at the rate of twelve per cent, with the school money, as yet unappropriated to its ultimate use. The last of these was made in October of 1835.

Early in that year the state legislature chartered the State Bank of Illinois, of which Mr. Fell became agent. This institution consisted of a "parent bank" at Springfield, with branches scattered over the state, and had a capital of one and a half million dollars. During 1835 and 1836 the bank made seventy-seven mortgages in the city and vicinity of Bloomington, to most of which Fell's name is signed as witness to instrument. The bank passed out of existence in February, 1842, having suspended specie payment in May, 1837, with its bills at fifteen per cent discount.²

The records of these and other enterprises show that by 1840 Fell had become a man of position and prominence in Central Illinois. He was known chiefly for his dealings in real estate, and of these it is meet to speak more fully.

2) N. H. Ridgley to Fell, Oct. 30, Nov. 2, Nov. 6, Nov. 13, 1835; May 3, 1836. E. J. Phillips to Fell, May 10, 1836. Ridgley to Fell, Oct. 11, Oct. 29, Nov. 18, 1836. Phillips to Fell, Nov. 26; Ridgley to Fell, Nov. 26 and 29, 1836. Thompson, "A Study of the Administration of Governor Thomas Ford," in Governor's Letter-Books, 1840-1853. Pp. xii-L Illinois Historical Collections, VII. Ford, History of Illinois, 191ff.

¹⁾ Benjamin Mills to Fell, Feb. 22, 1833. (Mr. Mills was opposed in this election by W. L. May, another personal friend of Fell.) Joseph Duncan to Fell, April 4, 1834. The manuscript of a Fourth of July oration, delivered in 1833 or 1834, is interesting in that it contains, beside the usual congratulatory and patriotic sentiments, a strong plea for free public schools. Mr. Fell delivered this same oration again in Clinton many years later, at which time he noted the presence of two or three Revolutionary soldiers.



Business Ventures and Home Life (1834-1856)

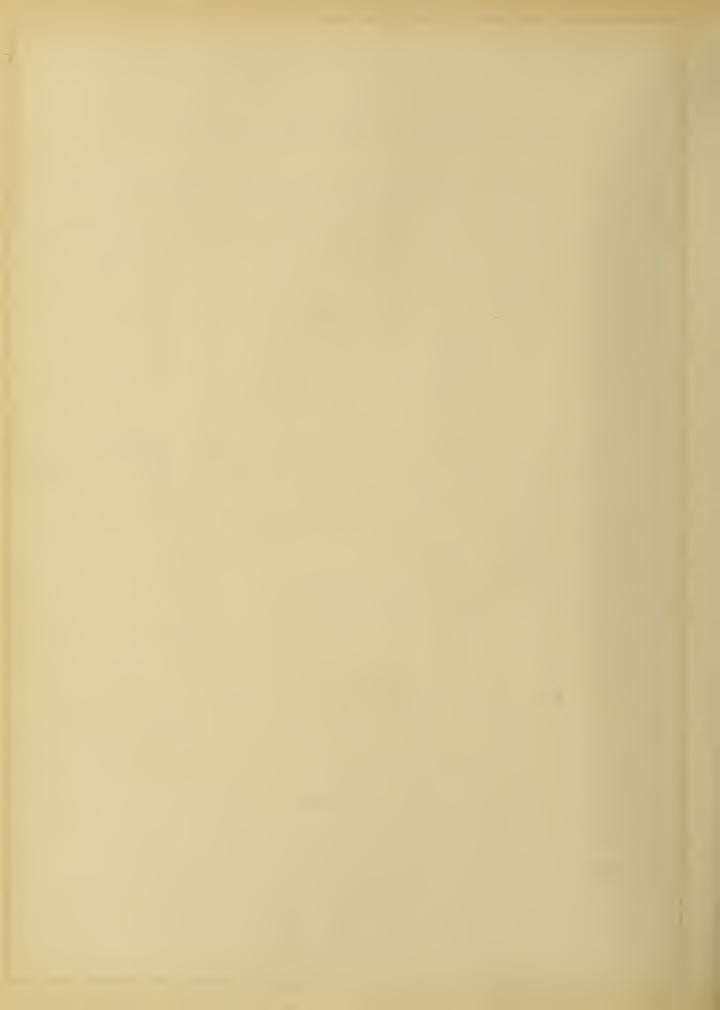
The preemption law of 1830, practically reenacted in 1834, provided that when two men settled on the same quarter section of government land, each of them might preempt an addition eighty acres anywhere in the same land district. These claims were called Many poor men were induced by capitalists to lend their names for floats, later to sell the claims so acquired for enough to pay for the land they lived on. In this way many hard-pressed pioneers were enabled to gain a title to their farms, while such land-buyers as were shrewd enough or had the requisite ready money, Mr. Fell. secured much fine land in Illinois during the thirties. who first visited the village of Chicago late in 1833, afterward remakred to friends that land in that locality might be secured in this way, and that it would be a paying investment, as a great city would eventually stand on the lake-front at that point. friends laughed at him, as much of the land for which he prophesied immense future values was covered with water most of the year.

One man in Bloomington, however, William Durley, declared that he believed Fell right in his estimate of Chicago's future, and loaned him money for operations there. He demanded a high rate of interest for this, or, if he preferred it whenthe time of settlement came, half the land. With the money Fell secured four floats in the fall of 1834 for land within the limits of the present city.

¹⁾ Twenty-first Cong. Session I, Acts of the U.S. Chap. 209, Section 2. (May 29, 1830).

Twenty-third Cong. Session I, Acts of the U.S. Chap. 54, Sections 2-3. (June 19, 1834)

²⁾ Fell to his parents, Nov. 17, 1833.

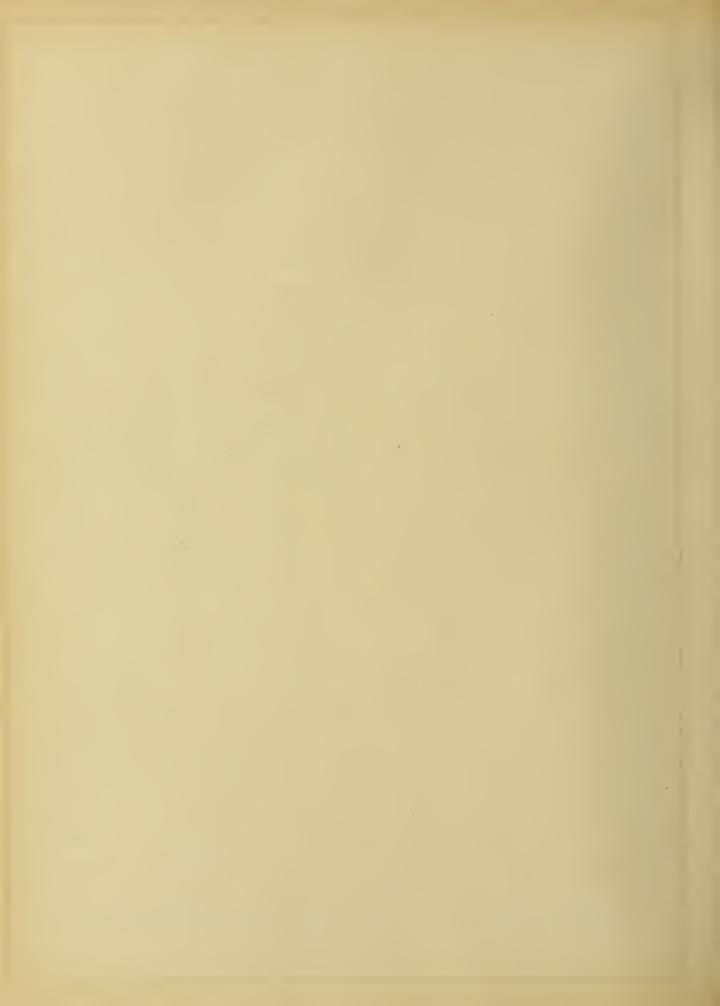


when the notes were due, Mr. Durley chose half the land as his share. Part of the two "eighties" which came to him, Fell laid out in town lots. The rest of the land he sold to David Davis, Dr. John Anderson, James Allen, M. L. Covell and O. Covell for 8,000, taking their notes for the amount. After the crash of 1837 he took back the land ans surrendered the notes, at the earnest entreaty of the purchasers. His purpose was to hold the land for the advance which he knew would follow when better times had restored confidence. But although he held out against the storm longer than many, his liabilities were such finally that he had to sacrifice even this resource. He mortgaged the "eighties" for 2800 each, the mortgages being foreclosed by David Davis and others.

Fell was one of several men who bought the quarter section embracing the harbor of Milwaukee. Before he sold this holding, therefore, he was much interested in the development of that city, and of the state of Wisconsin. Gov. John Reynolds, writing to him from Washington in 1836, sent the pleasant news of assured or probable federal aid for a lighthouse in Milwaukee harbor, a survey of the harbor, and a "road to start from that point running west to the Mississippi." William L. May, having been elected to the House, attempted to secure a postoffice at Chippewa, at Fell's earnest solicitation; but failed, because Chippewa was then still in the Indian country. Fell owned lands "up the river from Cassville" in Wisconsin, in 1837, and made an inspecting tour among the

¹⁾ Lewis states that they comprised "Fell's Addition to Canalport." (Bridgeport?)

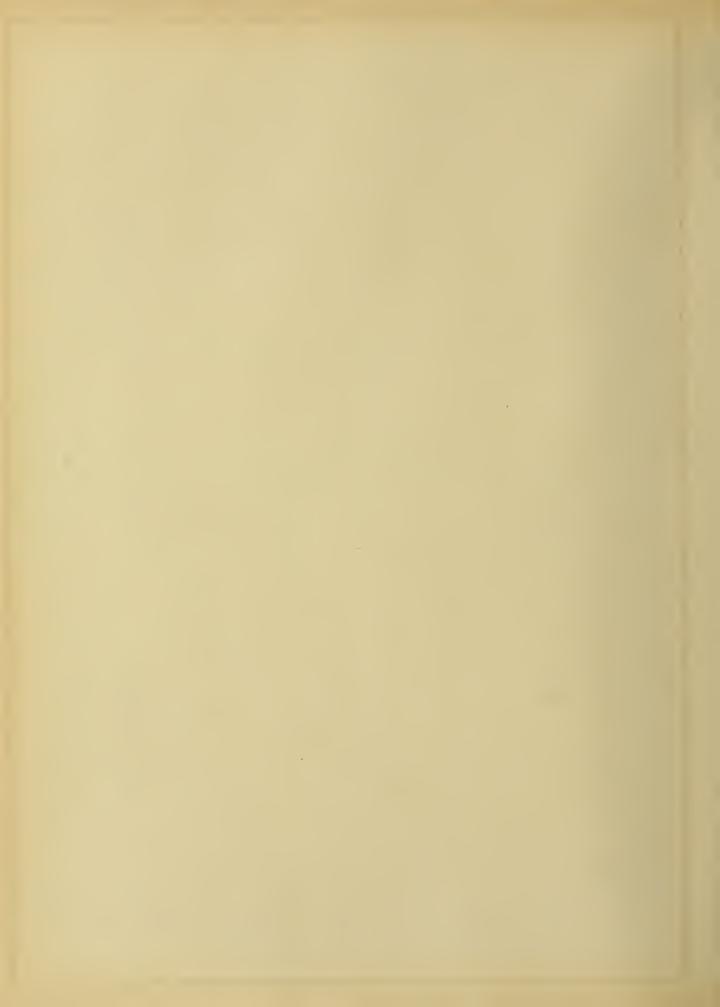
²⁾ Lewis Life, 25-7. Fell was at this time unable to borrow money of Eastern capitalists, while Davis had friends from whom he secured the money. William L. May to Fell, Feb. 28, 1838.



Indians in the autumn of that year.1

But these operations in real estate in places at that time far distant from his own home, were insignificant when compared with Fell's part in the development of central Illinois. Gaining a reputation as a judge of land in connection with his business of locating tracts for settlement and investment, and becoming thoroughly acquainted with the topography of the country and with land values, through his work of loaning school funds and State Bank funds, he entered early into extensive operations in Illinois lands for himself and others. He had a great faith in the land. When a boy, spending unhappy hours picking the stones from the rocky farm in Pennsylvania, he had dreamed of the prairie, and wished that he might own farms in the land where, travelers said, there were no stones in the fields. He was in a position, during these halcyon years between his arrival in Illinois and the great panic of 1837, to satisfy this early ambition. He did so on a scale which only the low land values and the easy speculation of the day made possible. He was one of a generation of men of large faith and far vision, who believed in their state, who foresaw the empire of the West that was to be, and who supported their faith by generous investments. Besides men of such a stripe, there were any number of mere adventurers, wildcat speculators, who contributed also to the feeling of security and prosperity that preceded the panic of 1837. The General Assembly, in 1836 and 1837, entered into an ambitious series of internal improvements, which while it saddled the state

¹⁾ John Reynolds to Fell, June 28 and July 6, 1836. (Reynolds was financially interested in the lands dealt in by Durley and Fell.) Wm. L. May to Fell, Feb. 28, 1838. Fell to Hester Vernon Brown, July 30, 1837; "from the Plain River, Cook County, Wisconsin." Fell to Wm. Brown, Aug. 24, 1837.

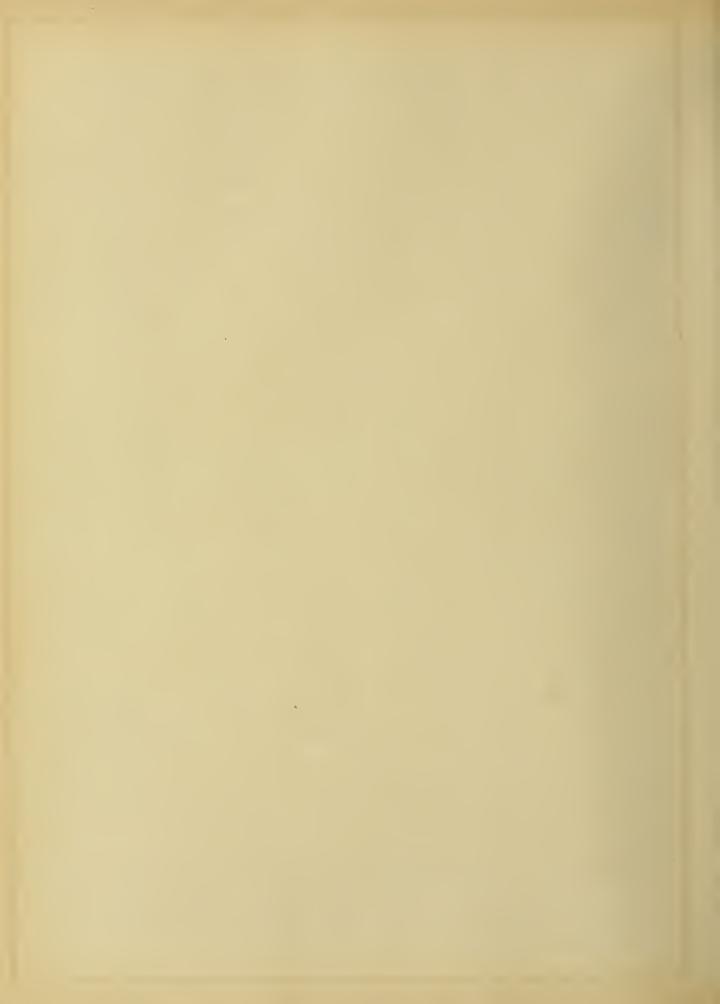


with a debt of over fourteen million dollars, was nevertheless a strong stimulant to progress. The period was one of rapid development. Lerely to have been upon the market, to have been bought and sold, to have a price, gave value and prominence to the Western lands and to Western enterprise. When in addition to this towns were founded and railroads were projected and built across the wastes that separated the frontier cities, when schools and churches and shops gave to Western life an approximation of conditions "back East," the goal of the builders of the West seemed in sight.

In the work of nation-building Jesse Fell had no small part in that region which he adopted for his home. He worked mainly in central Illinois, with Bloomington as a center, but branches out wherever opportunity offered. Clinton was among the first towns in which he became interested. He founded the town, with James Allen, in 1835, naming it for DeWitt Clinton. Mr. Fell had entered a goodly amount of land about the site of his proposed town before laying it out, and made a handsome profit from the sale of town lots. The town owes to him, as did all the places where he had a chance to plant, its early growth of trees.

Fell did not escape paying the price for what he accomplished His restless energy led him to overwork, and he became very seriously ill in June, 1835. He was in Chicago at the time of his seizure, on the twenty-third of the month, and started the next day for Bloomington, hoping to reach his friends before the malady

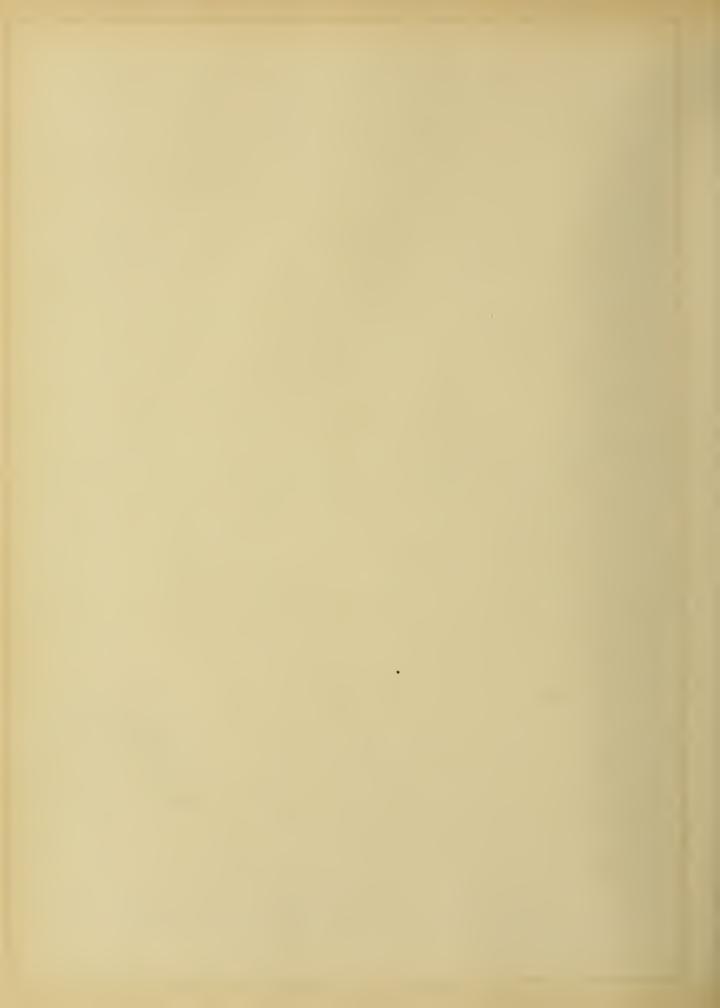
¹⁾ Mail routes were established by Congress in response to petitions from citizens of the localities to be served. In 1838, for instance, the people of McLean and Tazewell counties asked for a mailroute from Bloomington to Lacon. It was not granted at once, but seems to have been subsequently. Sen. Richard M. Young to Fell, Feb. 21, 1839.



developed into anything requiring constant care. He succeeded in reaching the home of Dr. Gaylord at Oxbow Prairie in Putnam County, where he was taken in and cared for while he lay almost hopelessly ill for three weeks. At the end of that time he was placed in a carriage and taken to Bloomington, not without further injury to his health; and was unable to attend to his usual business until about the end of July. Early in August, however, he made a long trip to St. Louis, stopping at the Brown home in Delavan on the way. He himself attributed his illness to exposure and overwork, explaining to his family that in the six months preceding it he had traveled not less than five thousand miles, going sixty, seventy, eighty, and even eighty-five miles in a day. This, he further pointed out, was in every kind of weather, hot and cold, wet and dry, swimming his horse through streams and afterward riding in wet clothes for hours, and making long rides at night. But the goal for which he had made these sacrifices was by that time gained, and he registered a vow not again so to abuse his powers of endurance. He had made, he said, not only what he himself needed, but also a surplus with which to aid those who had long aided him. 1

Having thus earned a rest, in the autumn of 1835 he went back to his old home for the first time since settling in the West, stopping at the home of his brother Thomas in Lancaster, Ohio. In Pennsylvania he suffered a relapse of his former fever, lying ill at his brother Robert's in Little Britain for over a month. In the spring of 1836, however, he was back in Bloomington, not only

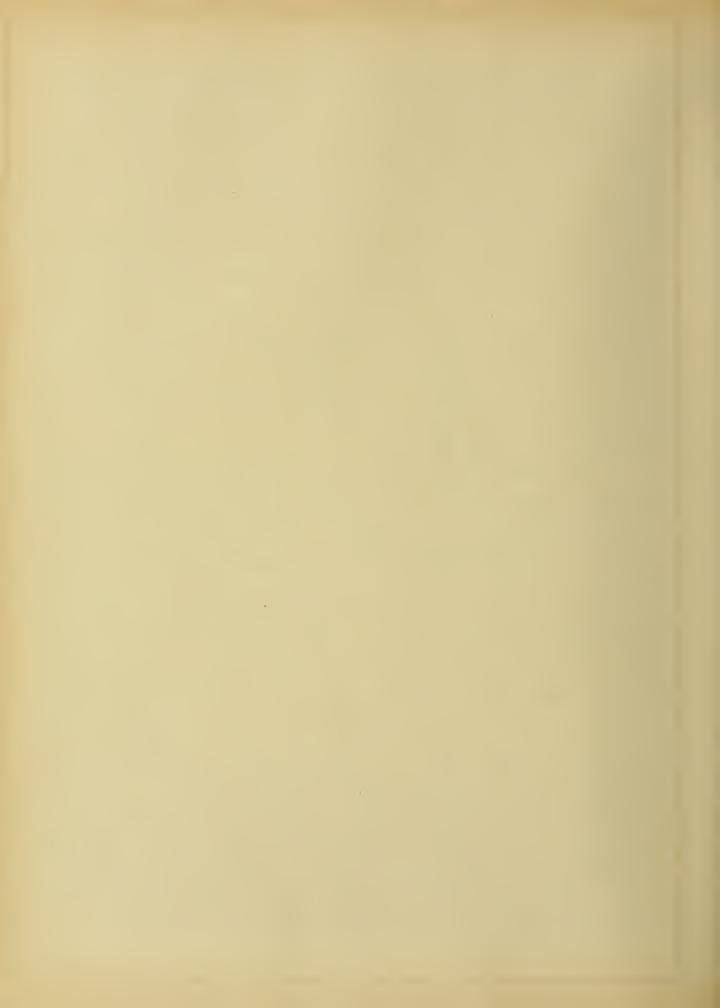
¹⁾ Fell to some member of his family, Aug. 3, 1835. When Fell's brother Kersey arrived in Bloomington the next spring, he was told that Jesse W. Fell was one of the richest men in town. Lewis Life, 25.



looking after his own interestes, but planning for his brother Kersey. He had entered land for his brother Joshua during the preceding year, and this was deeded to him in May, 1836. Kersey Fell, after a period of clerkship for Covell and Gridley, was made clerk of the new DeWitt County, with power to organize it. He was later admitted to the McLean County bar and practised for many years in Bloomington. Thomas left Ohio for the same place after his brother's visit in the fall of 1835. Rebecca Fell, a favorite sister, was being educated at Kimberton Boarding School, and later became a school teacher in McLean County. In 1837 all of Fell's family who were not already in the West, came to Bloomington, where they made their home subsequently.

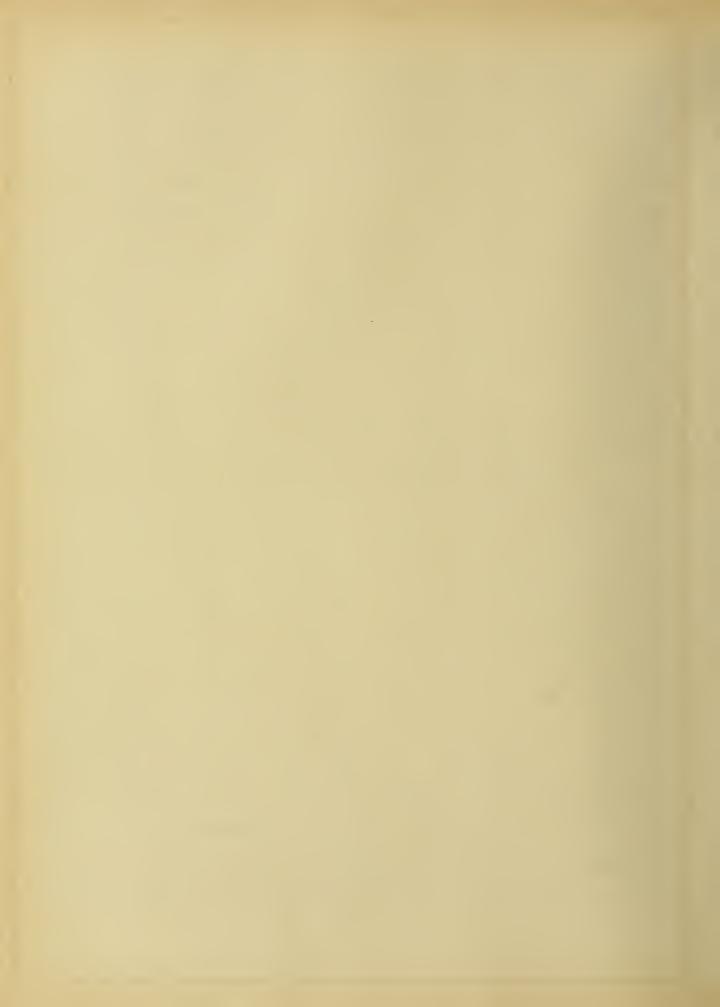
Two years after his family had following him to Illinois,
Mr. Fell married Hester Vernon Brown, a daughter of that home which
had first welcomed him in the West. Rev. Nathaniel Wright of
Tremont, a Universalist clergyman, performed the marriage ceremony,
for both bride and bridegroom had become somewhat weened away from
Quaker ways and Quaker beliefs. The wedding day was January 26,
1838. Mr. Fell's parents were not there, but his sister Rebecca
and his brother Kersey attended, and his close friend David Davis
was best man. Joshua Brown, brother of the bride, who was also a
friend much valued, came to the wedding from his home in Edwards

¹⁾ McLean County Historical Society Transactions, II. Fell to Hester V. Brown, Feb. 28, 1837. Rebecca Fell to Fell, Nov. 20, 1836. She expresses the greatest love and gratitude to her brother. The letter is finely written and quaintly composed, but unbends in places to a degree of childish carelessness and even one faint suspicion of slang. Earlier letters, models of an art carefully taught in girls' boarding schools of that day, and showing both strength of character and an irrepressible sense of humor, are dated June 10, Sept. 25, Oct. 23, and Christmas, 1836.



County, and afterwards helped to move the household goods into the cottage that Mr. Fell had built in Bloomington. This cottage later enlarged by many additions, was on the land which Fell subsequently sold to David Davis. In the accomplishment of Jesse Fell his wife had no small part. She was a notable "manager", in the comprehencive sense in which that word is used in speaking of housewives. She was courageous, capable, and independent. In her own home and in the community she seconded the efforts of her husband with sympathy and ability. Outliving him by twenty years, she was privileged to carry out some of his plans which he himself had left unfinished; but in the same time she demonstrated the force of her own personality, which for so many years she had made second to his.

After the first few years in Bloomington Fell neglected his law practice in favor of the more congenial work of buying and selling land. In 1836 he sold out both books and practice to David Davis, although he seems to have continued to use the same office with him for some time. David Davis came from Maryland in the autumn of 1835, and settled in Pekin. The chills and fever of the early prairie days so sapped his strength that he had about decided to leave Illinois, when Jesse Fell, alert for a good lawyer to whom he might turn over his now burdensome practice, persuaded him to go to Bloomington. He offered his own books, office and whatever financial help might be necessary, as an inducement; and kept through a long life his promise of friendship and help. With the practice and office, Fell sold him several hundred acres of land, and the prevalent price of eight dollars per acre, and this

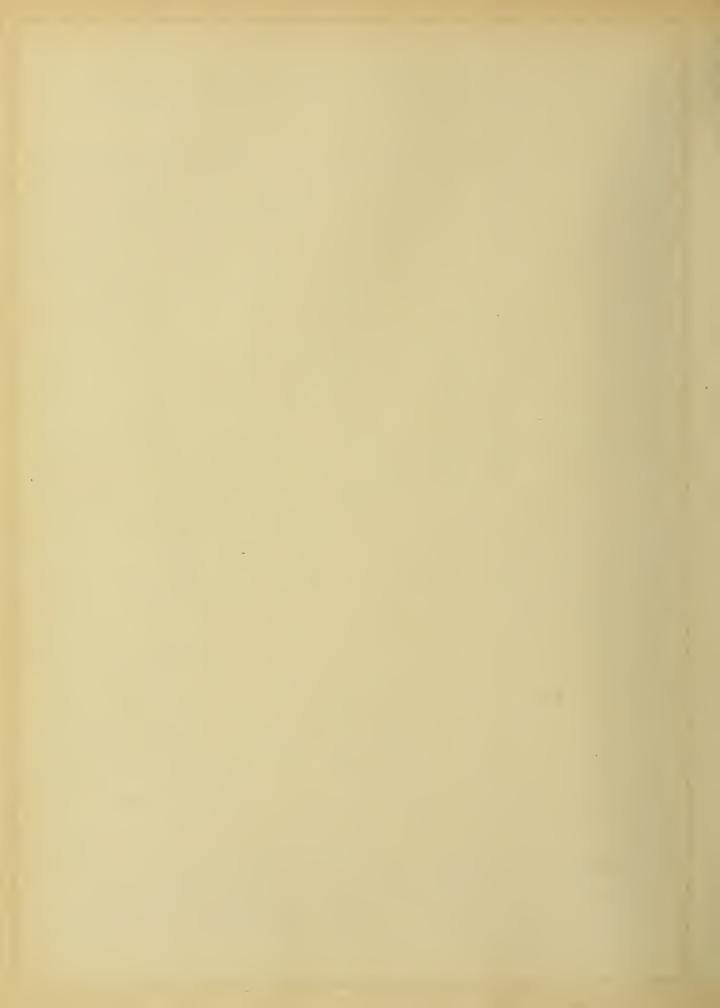


land became the nucleus of Davis' subsequently considerable for-

His real estate and other business took Fell frequently to the eastern cities. In 1841 he made such a trip, of which interesting details are to be found in various letters. Bidding his wife goodby at Pekin, whence she went to her father's home with her son Henry, to stay until her husband's return, he boarded the Glaugus (?) for St. Louis. There he waited from Monday until Wednesday for a boat to Cincinnati, taking then the Goddess of Liberty, which he thought a "splendid boat," and which reached that city on Sunday evening. On Monday morning he took passage in the Tioga for Wheeling, thence bystage to Baltimore, where he arrived June 20, 1841. Two days later he was in Washington.

In Washington he met, in the House of Representatives, his old preceptor and friend, Gen. Stokely of Steubenville. He interested him in the manuscript of a book he had with him, which had been copyrighted in March; and the two men arranged at that time for its publication. It was a digest of laws and forms relative to real estate, to be used evidently as a reference or text book. No further reference is made to it after 1841, and it was never published, although plans for bringing it out seem to have been completed. Fell wrote to his wife at the time that he had secured the favorable attention of some of the best lawyers in the country concerning it. "We think we shall be able to make some

¹⁾ The Bloomington Observer and M'Lean County Advocate of April 22, 1837, contains the professional card of "David Davis, Attorney and Counsellor at Law. ... Office on Front Street, with J. W. Fell, Lsq. ... The same newspaper contains the card of Thomas Fell, vendue crier. Fell in The Pantagraph, June 29, 1836.



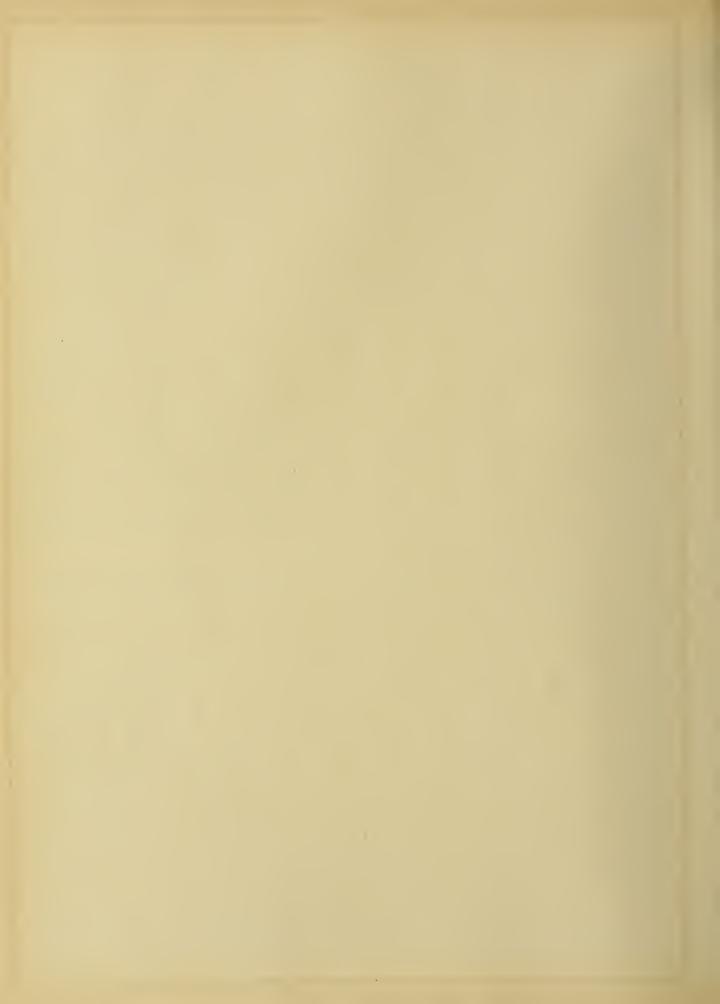
money out of it," he added.1

House, whom it was a pleasure to greet. The westerner found much intertainment in visiting sessions of Congress, and wrote his wife faithful accounts of what he saw there. Clay had introduced his bank bill, which many thought would pass, "although some fear."

Fell heard him make a strong plea for it, and admitted in his letter that while he still considered Clay a great man, he had decided that noted men are like others - distance lends enchantment. "I yesterday visited the President and Post Office Department - and had a couple of Loco Post masters dismissed. The President is a clean, good sort of man - but "ugly as sin." He predicted the creation of a national bank, the repeal of the Sub-Treasury law, the distribution of the proceeds of the public lands, and a slight modification of the tariff.

From Washington he returned to Baltimore, and took passage in a steamboat down Chesapeake Bay to the eastern shore of Maryland, where he visited Frank Brattan, an old Bloomington friend. Returning to Baltimore, he went the next day to Philadelphia, noting the fact that it took only five hours to go one hundred miles. In Philadelphia he was most impressed, to judge by the space given to the matter in one of his punctiliously frequent letters to his wife, by a new "bonnett" being worn by the Quaker girls of that city. "I have concluded," he wrote her, "when I get ready to start home to buy thee a Bonnett, if I can muster money

¹⁾ The complete title: Digest of the Statute Laws of the States and Territories of the United States concerning the promissory notes and bills of exchange - the limitations of actions - the conveyance of real estate and the appropriate modes of authen-



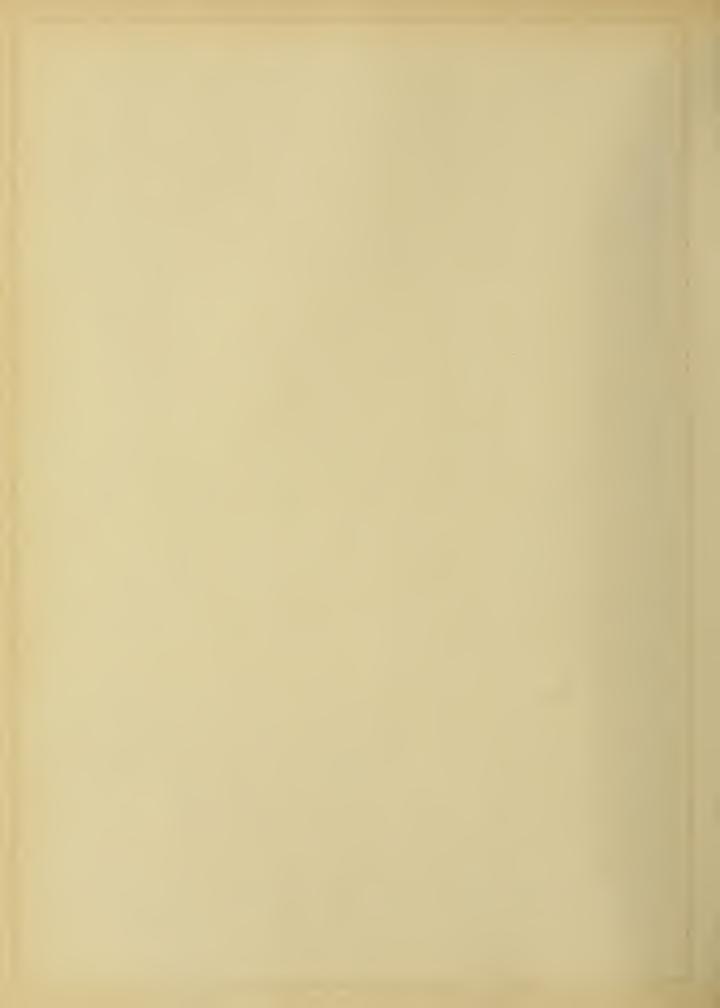
enough to spare - of a very pretty fashion lately introduced. If I get one I will buy the materials to make some more of the same kind. ... I have almost fallen in love with the Quaker belles of Chestnut Street on account of their pretty bonnetts. Not perhaps entirely on account of their bonnetts either - but because they are in the first place in themselves very pretty - and secondly because their dress and deportment is so neat and modest. Of all the city girls in the world commend me to the Philadelphians."

He promised his son Henry books and toys in the same letter.

During his stay in Philadelphia, beside attending to the business which had taken him to the East, he visited a close friend, Joseph J. Lewis, at Westchester. The return trip was made by way of New York City and the Great Lakes. Fell'expected to reach his home by about the first of August, which meant very rapid transit for those days; there is no record, however, of the date of his return. It was a long and arduous journey for the early forties, and was among the first of many; for until old age forced him to limit his activities, he made one or two trips to the Atlantic seaboard each year.

The real estate business, indeed, entailed far more absence from home than suited Fell, but it alsoo took him much into the open, which was a strong consideration for him. Its financial returns were greater than those of law practice, and it brought him into constant contact with many men, and with the very heart and spirit of the growth of the West. But the panic of 1837 put

ticating deeds, devices, letters of attorney, etc. From Copyright Office Records. Fell to his wife, June 22 and July 6, 1841.



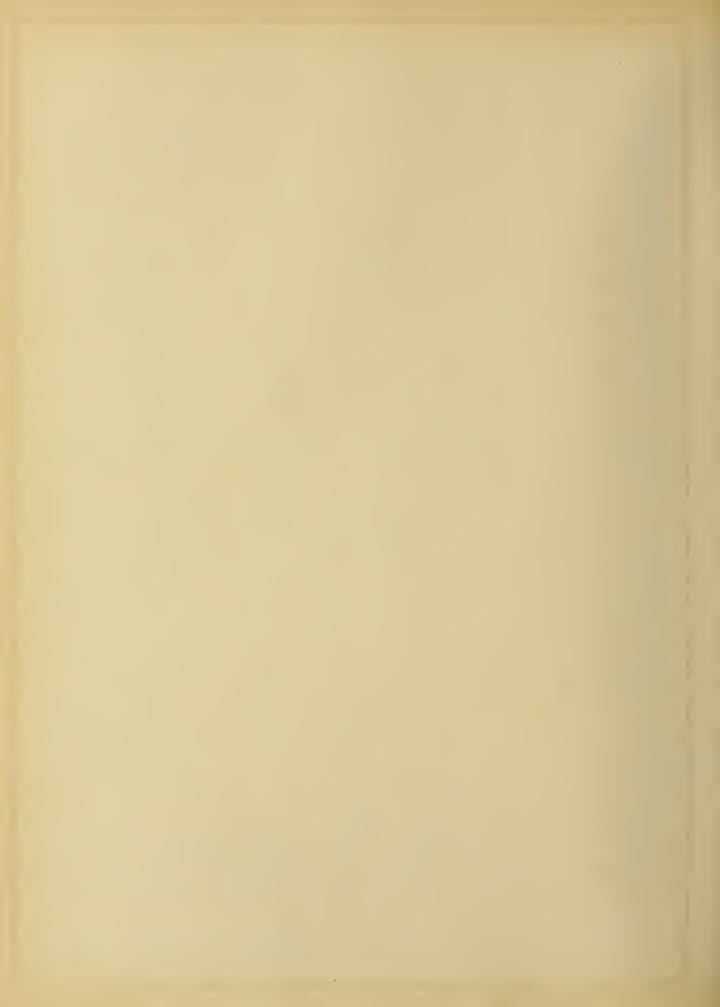
a stop to real estate operations, as to all other business. Fell lost all that he had gathered together, and was compelled to take benefit of the Bankruptcy Law of 1841. Surrendering all his lands, he was discharged from his indebtedness, and began again, as penniless as when he had come to Illinois in 1832. As the bankruptcy court offered much business for lawyers, he took up his old profession again, reluctantly but with considerable success. The proceedings were heldin the United States court at Springfield, and the work brought Fell again into his old strenuous habits. He invariably prepared his cases in Bloomington, that he might be with or near his family as much as possible; then leaving his home at sunset, he would appear in court the next morning ready to prosecute the business of the day. 1

But the practice of law was as irksome to him as it had been before, and he planned to excape from it as soon as possible.

Since real estate offered no means at that time, he resolved to try farming, and for that purpose moved, in 1844, to a new home, which was known then and for many years after as Fort Jesse. Some people, appalled at its distance of four miles from the town, called it Fell's Folly. It had been entered for Joseph J. Lewis. It was far from any other habitation, having but one house between it and Bloomington. There was also a stream, which in rainy seasons of the year became too swollen to be forded. Here Fell made a cabin,

¹⁾ Certificate of admission to the Illinois District Court, Feb. 10, 1842. In an interview with Richard Edwards long afterward, Fell explained his dislike of law by saying that he wished to be able to use his powers of persuasion where conviction urged, and not for money from clients; and that he disliked to live indoors.

[&]quot;A few years later, having accumulated some property, he voluntarily paid all his indebtedness, although not legally liable."
- E. M. Price, Jesse W. Fell. Lewis Life, 34.



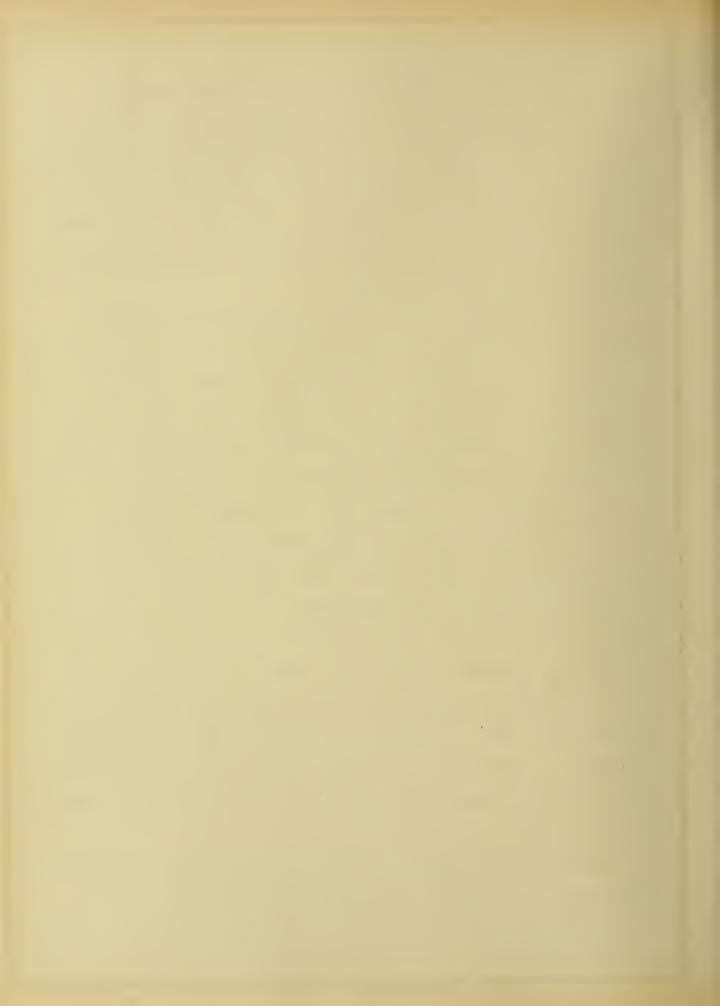
and broke the virgin prairie in very real pioneer fashion. He rejoiced in the opportunity to plant trees, and put out many of the blank locusts which were at that time regarded as particularly well suited to Illinois conditions, since they grew rapidly and produced a very hard and durable wood. The borer, which makes the black locust an enemy to all other trees and a nuisance in a community, had not then appeared.

The life of the Fells at Fort Jesse was the life of a typical pioneer family. Nightly there burned in their window the candle which pioneer custom prescribed as a guide for travelers; and nightly, there howled around it the prairie wolves. Henry C. Fell relates an incident which illustrates the conditions under which the prairie farm became a home. Mr. Fell and his wife had gone to Bloomington, and while they were absent a storm had swollen the stream so that it became impassable. Two children, Henry and Eliza, had been left at the farm, and at the coming of the storm they became much frightened. While they huddled in a corner, a big grey wolf thrust his head in at the window, where a pane of glass had been broken out. Henry, although then only about seven years of age, had the valor characteristic of pioneer children, and three a footstool at the wolf's head, after which he went away. The pet deer, which the children had brought into the cabin, and which attracted the wolves, was later given to a son of Gen. Grindley.2

In 1845 Fell bought a farm of one hundred acres near Payson,
Adams County, to which he moved from Fort Jesse that autumn.

¹⁾ Jacob Spawr of Lexington, Illinois, in Pantagraph, July 1, 1881. Lewis Life. 35.

²⁾ Lewis Life, 35. Interview with Henry Fell, May 31, 1913.



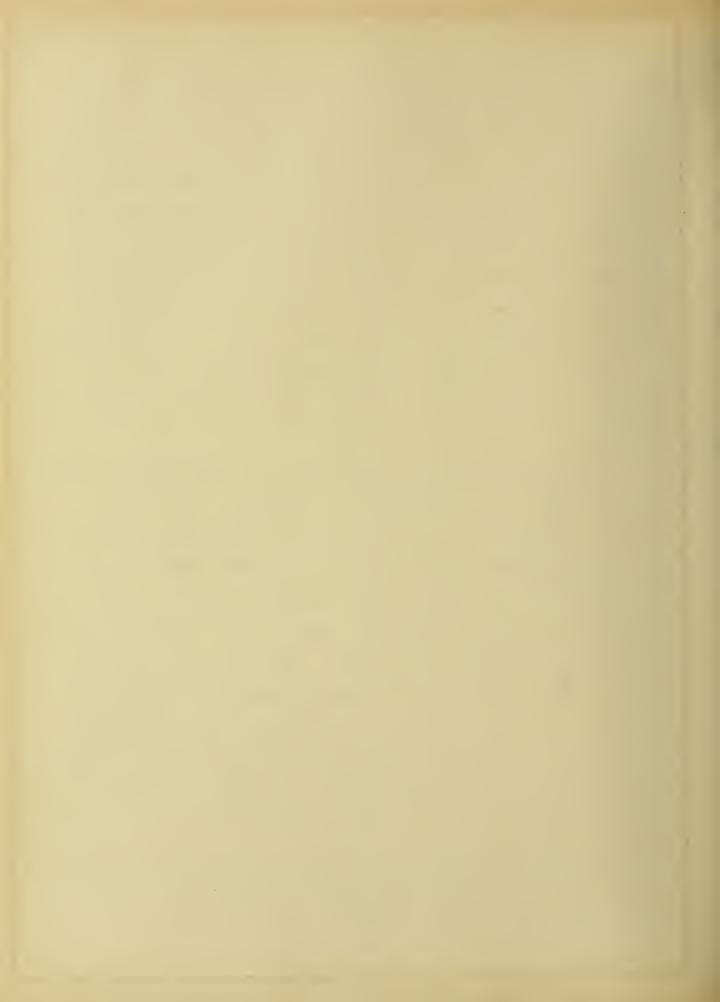
About forty acres of the one hundred were in timber; and thirty acres of that under cultivation were set out to trees, Fell's intention being to establish a nursery which should cater to the market afforded by the increasing settlements in the neighborhood of Quincy. The nursery business did not meet his expectations, although he sold enough fruit to make the venture a paying one. The farm, which was about a mile and a quarter northwest of the village, was known as Fruit Hill. As Quincy afforded him his nearest large market, Fell set to work to have a good road made to that town. He succeeded, largely through his own exertions, in securing a straight road of twelve miles which passed through his farm.1

During this period he found time to be interested in various public affairs, and particularly in education. He spoke at teachers' institutes, and was much concerned for the welfare of the local Methodist church, of which he became a member. When he moved to Fruit Farm there was only a private school at Payson, but during his residence a "seminary", kept in such a way as more fully to serve the community, was opened. Farming did not prevent an active interest in state and national affairs, as a letter from Lincoln at this time shows. As an orthodox Whig, he strongly disapproved the management of the Mexican War, and wrote to Lincoln, then serving his state in Washington, to ask him to present a petition for a speedy peace. Lincoln promised to do so at the proper 3

¹⁾ Lewis Life, 37.

²⁾ The report of one such address, given before the Adams County Institute, is in The Western Whig of July 20, 1850. Lewis Life, 36.

³⁾ Lincoln to Fell, March 1, 1848.

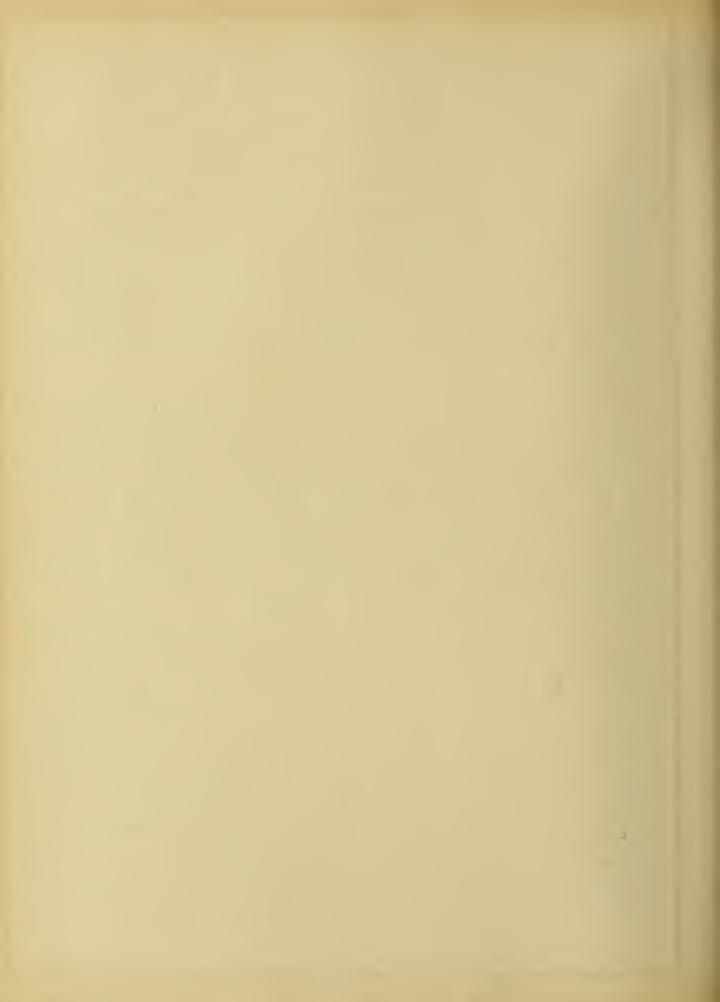


time, but added that there was in Washington a feeling that the war was over and that the treaty sent in would be endorsed.

In 1849 a number of the citizens of Quincy, led by John Wood, afterward governor, resolved to go to California, where the gold fields were attracting people from all over the world. Fell was asked to join the party, and made preparation to go, although it was necessary to borrow money for the expedition. He went to Bloomington and bade his friends goodby, but at the last minute failed to raise the necessary funds for the outfit, and gave up the project.

In 1851 he arranged to return to Bloomington by trading his Payson farm to his brother Robert, for a farm of 240 acres near Bloomington. Robert disposed of his nursery stock to F. K. Phoenix, who came to Bloomington from Delavan, Wisconsin, at Jesse Fell's earnest solicitation. Starting with Robert Fell's stock of trees, Phoenix in time developed one of the most famous of the nurseries for which Normal was later noted.

Upon his return to Bloomington Fell first engaged in newspaper work, of which mention is made elsewhere more particularly. He soon gave that up, however, to engage in real estate, which was again becoming a source of profit in the early fifties. Having little money of his own, he made a trip to New York and Boston in the autumn of 1852, for the purpose of interesting Eastern capitalists in Illinois land. In this he was very successful, and during the decade following he bought and sold great tracts of land throughout central Illinois, founded several towns and enlarged others. Pontiac, Lexington, Towanda, Clinton, LeRoy and other



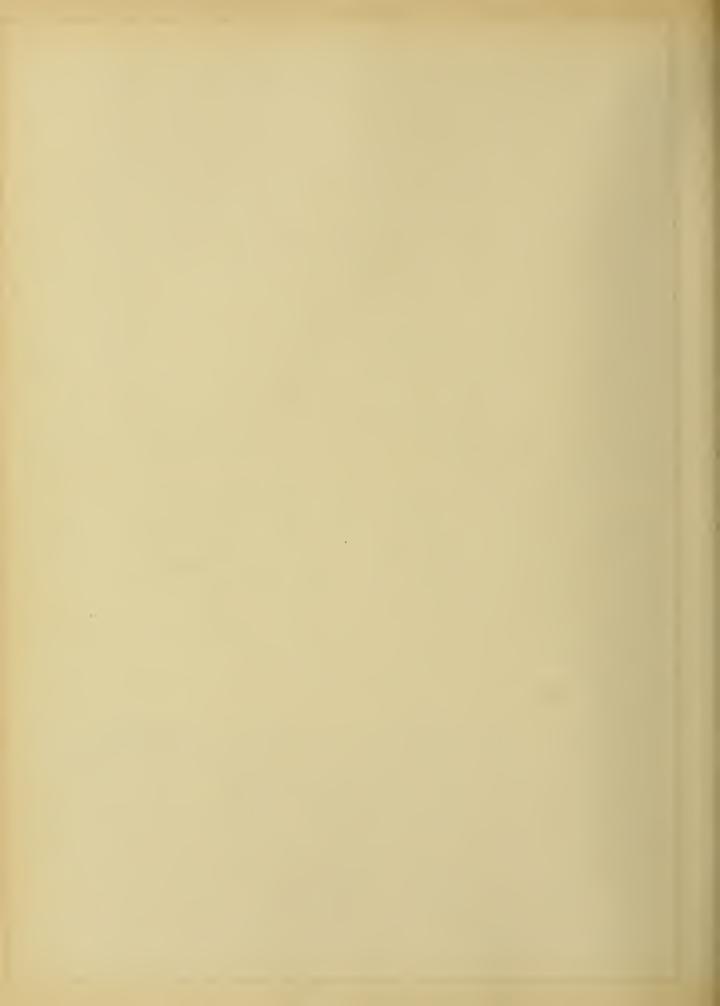
towns were among those in which he was interested. He made additions to Bloomington and Decatur, and dealt in town lots in Joliet and Dwight. North Bloomington was first planned in 1854.

With the founding of these towns came the need of means of communication and transportation. In road-building of the primitive sort which served Illinois for years, Fell did his part. He secured, for instance, the surveying of a wagon-road parallel to the railroad, from Bloomington to Towanda, but did not succeed in having it extended to Lexington. He was active in getting a similar road from Lincoln to Minonk. Early in his life he had learned surveying, and this stood him in hand later in many ways. His ability to measure land and decide lines saved time and money in numberless instances.²

Going farther afield, in 1855 he bought timber lands in southern Illinois, and built a lumber-mill at Ullen, where the Illinois Central crosses the Sachee about twenty miles north of Cairo. Lyman Blakeslee was his partner in this mill, and his brother Kersey in another at Valley Forge, which was operated by Elijah Depew, an old neighbor in Bloomington. E. J. Lewis, who was employed by Fell for about six months at Ullen, records that

¹⁾ Pantagraph, Nov. 28, 29, and Dec. 1, 1902. Intelligencer, Aug. 10, 1853. The first plats of North Bloomington (undated, probably 1854) were lithographed by Latimer Brothers and Seymour, 15 Nassau St., corner of Pine, N.Y. Mr. Fell's interests in Pontiac came very near ending disastrously. An addition to the original town was made on land bought from a youth whose father sold it as guardian for him. Later, the Supreme Court made a decision in a similar case which would have made the Fell and all subsequent titles void, had not an astute lawyer of Pontiac, R. E. Williams, been able to prove that the young man had accepted his guardian's arrangements and receipted him. The Supreme Court upheld the Fell title. For an account of an unsuccessful attempt at town-founding, see J. O. Cunningham, History of Champaign County, 672-3. Judge Cunningham quotes Peck's Gazetteer (1837), which mentions "Byron, a townsite in Champaign County" on page 168. Bloomington Observer, Nov. 17, '38

²⁾ Interview, Henry Fell, May 31, 1913.

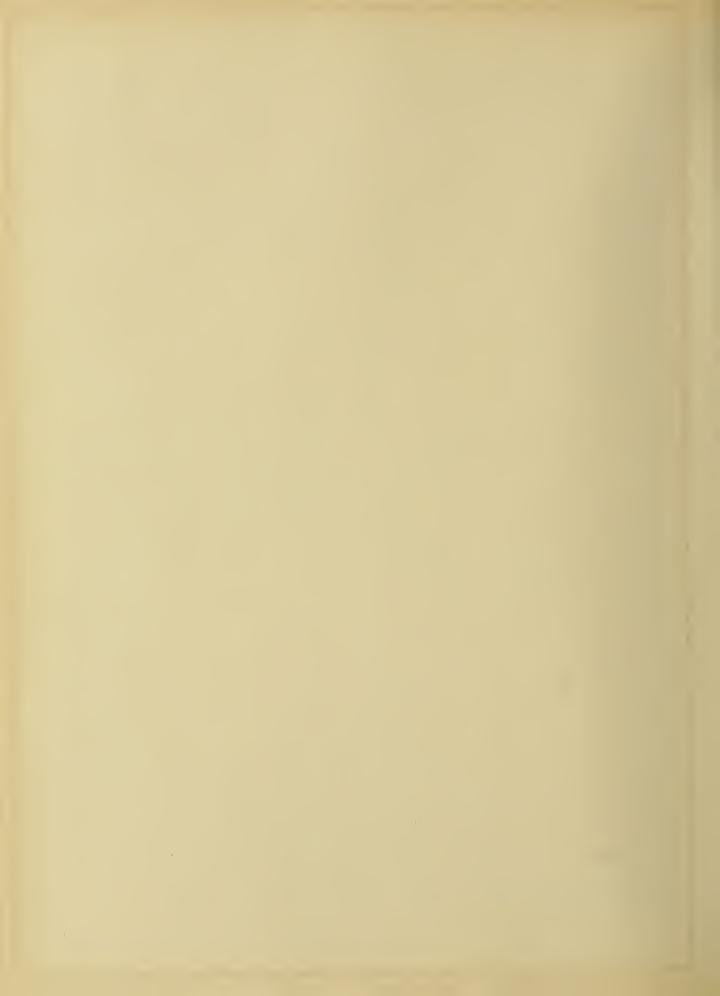


the winter of 1855-6 was an unusually cold one in southern Illinois, the thermometer often falling to eighteen degrees below zero. Armed with stout sticks and a compass, Fell and Lewis tramped over the frozen swamps, personally inspecting the low lands. The growth was cypress for the most part, and the strange "knees" (root protuberances) greatly impressed the two Pennsylvanians, to whom such fantastic growths were entirely new. The mill at Ullen was kept busy sawing out logs, for the unusual amount of ice on the rivers did great damage to the steamboats on the Mississippi and the Ohio, breaking wheels and injuring hulls. Putting into Cairo for repairs, they secured oak and other lumber from Ullen by rail.

faith in the Ullen venture, and in the autumn of 1856-7 he moved his family to that place. But the normal demand for lumber in southern Illinois was not sufficient to guarantee a prosperous business, and in the spring the family returned to Bloomington. The mills not having fulfilled their initial promise, Fell turned his attention again chiefly to real estate. He had not neglected this part of his business. In 1856 he advertised for sale "about five thousand acres of land" in Livingston, McLean and Vermillion counties, and about three hundred and fifty town lots in various parts of Illinois. In the autumn of that year he conducted at least one auction sale of lots (at Towanda) and this method of sale was repeated on a considerable scale in the fall of 1857. Late in the decade his holdings became very large, while records in the

¹⁾ Lewis Life, 44.

²⁾ Pantagraph, July 2, 1856. Tax list, May 14, 1859.



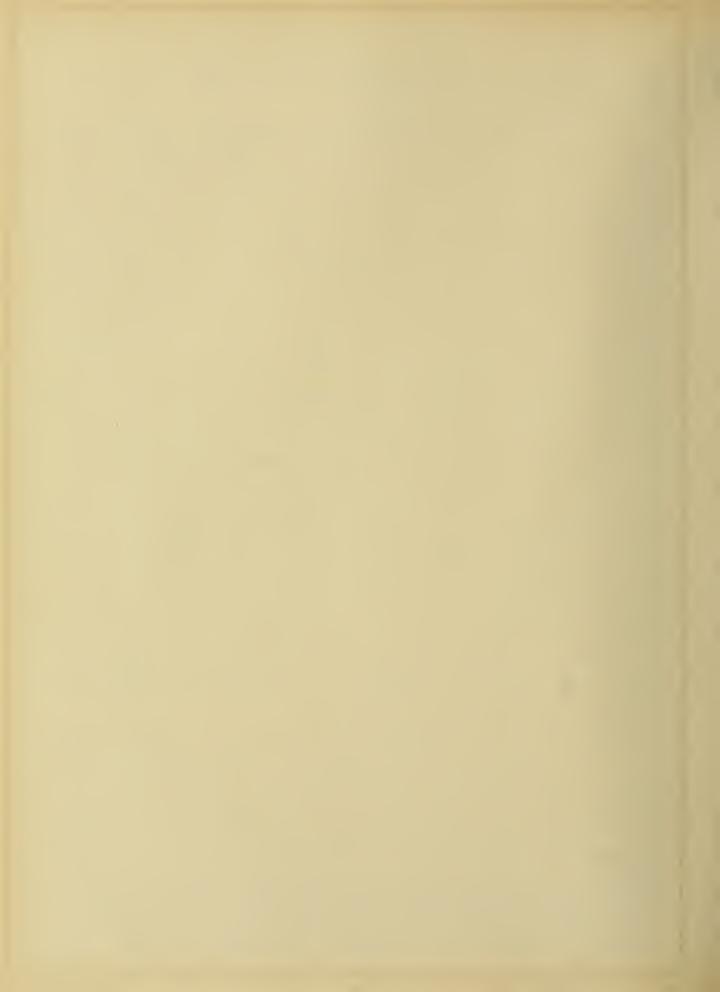
abstract offices show that he drove a lively business in transferring property.

It was during the summer of 1856 that Fell built his house at Fell Park in North Bloomington, which became afterward one of the landmarks of Normal. This house still stands (1914), although removed from its original site. It is a roomy square wooden structure, with a cupola atop, and verandahs built around three sides. It stood upon a knoll which Mr. Fell had selected more than twenty years before as a good place for a home. Here he secured about eighteen acres on the edge of the town, and planted the land to trees and shrubs according to the plans of a Mr. Saunders of Philadelphia, who was a landscape gardener of reputation. A herd of deer were added later, and Fell Park became the show place of Bloomington. Men great in the history of Illinois and the nation were entertained there; it became a famous meeting-place of notable people. Lovejoy, Bryant, Lincoln, Davis, Swett, and other leaders were frequent visitors. The Fell children entertained their friends there freely; it was a center of social life. The master of the house, himself usually absorbed in business, liked to have people about him enjoy themselves. It was the only private house in Normal where dancing was permitted.

The years at Fell Park were so full and so pleasant that one likes to linger upon the story of its life. There Mr. Fell's children grew to maturity, busy with many tasks and very happy.

Here his elder daughters Eliza and Clara were married, the former

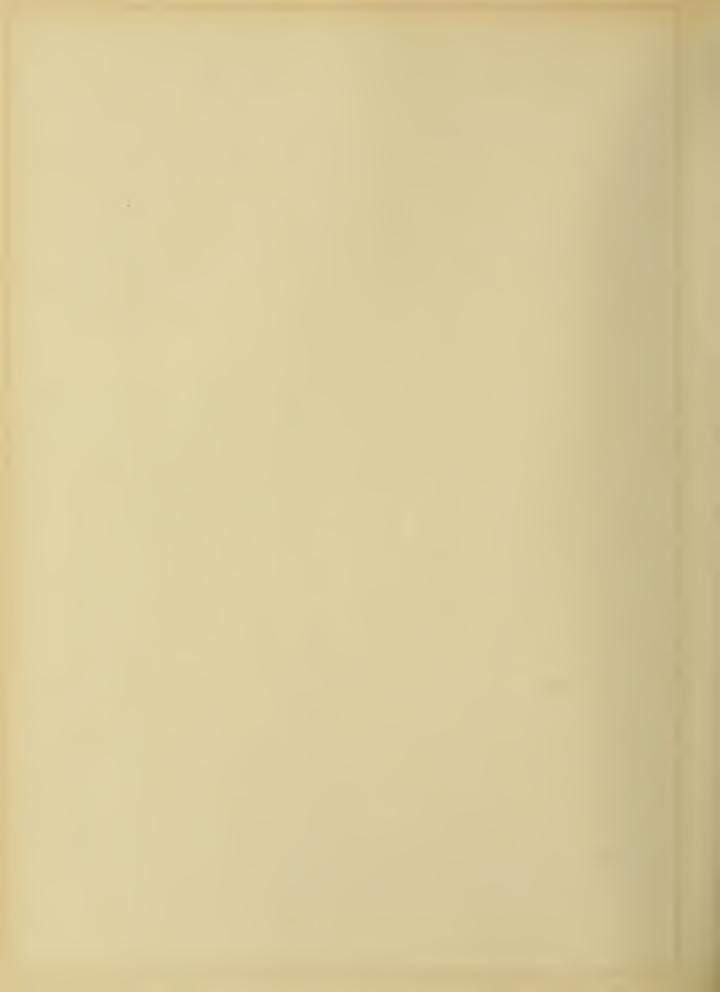
¹⁾ In 1833, when riding over the prairie with a neighbor named Kimler, Mr. Fell remarked that the roll in the prairie would be an ideal place for a home; whereupon Kimler had replied that probably no one would be fool enough to build so far from the timber. Grace Hurwood to Fannie Fell, March 16, 1913. Captain



to W. O. Davis, for many years editor of The Pantagraph, and the latter to Lieutenant James R. Fyffe, an officer of the Thirty-third Illinois Volunteer Regiment. Here the younger children went to school, in a small building that had been a carpenter shop during the building of the house, with their cousins and neighbors. This was a district school, but as it failed to meet all requirements, Mr. Fell employed Miss Mary Daniels, a graduate of Mt. Holyoke, to teach his own children, their cousins, and the McCambridge children, in his own home. This private school was continued until the model school at the Normal was opened.1

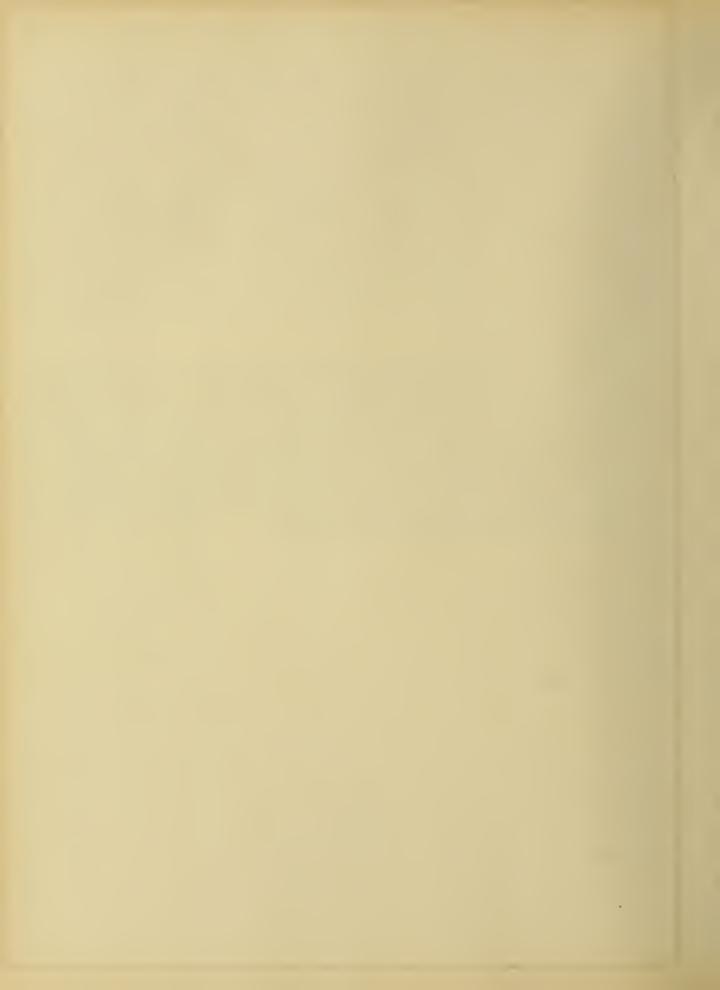
The master of the house, who never grew away from the simple ways of living in which he had been bred, directed the industries of the household. He was himself a man busy with his hands, where other men of his interestes would have had manual labor done by others. He moved his own lawn, and supervised personally the planting of trees or the erection of new buildings. All this workaday enterprise was not conducive to an appearance of immaculate grooming. His daughters and wife, especially the former, tried to look after him to keep him presentable. His friends, driving to Fell Park to consult him on business of politics, found him perspiringly industrious on the warmest summer days. Distinguished company, received in the parlor, waited while Mr. Fell was being hunted through field and orchard. "The girls" waylaid his path with the paraphernalia of refreshment. Somewhere between the Burnham, in his "Our Duty to Future Generations," an Arbor Day address delivered at the Normal School on April 21, 1905, relates

a similar incident, but dates it in 1845. 2) William McCambridge, My Remembrances of Jesse W. Fell.



back porch and the front parlor, clean collar and brushing and a hasty wash-up must be administered. He submitted to this loving supervision good-naturedly; he liked to be "fussed over" by his daughters. "It's all right, girls, it's all right," he would say. No amount of feminine emphasis, however, could persuade him that one's appearance really made much difference; he was interested in bigger things. The happiness of generations to come was the enterprise of men such as he. In view of that, what was a dusty coat, or work-soiled hands?

¹⁾ Mrs. L. B. Merwin (a grand-daugher), interview, Nov. 29, 1912. Dr. Sweney, the family physician, related a story which illustrates his indefatigable energy. A refractory horse had kicked him until he was a mass of bruises, and the doctor, being called to repair the damage, had swathed him in bandages and soaked him in liniament and left strict orders with the family that he was to be kept quiet. The next day, calling to redress the bruises, the distressed and apologetic family had to "chase after father" down to the edge of the place, about a quarter of a mile, and bring him up for examination and admonition. - John Dodge, Concerning Jesse W. Fell.



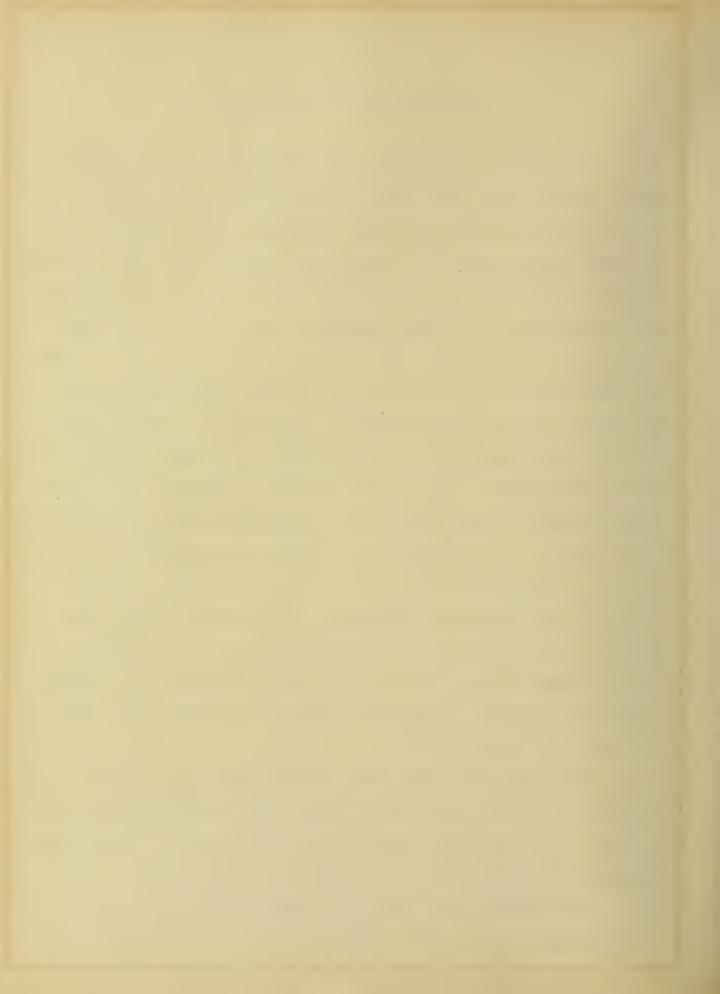
The Journalist. (1836-1870)

In the very early days of Bloomington, General Gridley made a yearly trip to the East to buy stock for his general store. In the autumn of 1836, Jesse Fell and James Allen entrusted to him the important commission of purchasing the equipment for a printing establishment, and of finding a man to edit and print a newspaper for Bloomington. Gridley induced two men, natives of Philadelphia, to return with him: William Hill and W. B. Brittain. had been employed for some time upon the St. Louis Democrat, and was acquainted with Western ways and conditions. Brittain came directly from Philadelphia, having shipped the press and type by way of New Orleans. The two men arrived in October, but Brittain became discouraged and went back to Philadelphia before the coming of the outfit. Hill stayed, and setting up his press in a room in the court house, brought out on January 14, 1837, the first number of the Bloomington Observer. About twenty numbers were printed before the paper suspended publication. It was well edited and well printed, but in the little frontier town it found insufficient support, despite its spirited interest in all that concerned the town's welfare. 1

Fell and Allen were sadly disappointed at the fiasco.

Although his affairs were then at a low ebb - or possibly because of that - Fell bought what he did not already own of the suspended Observer, and began to edit it himself in January, 1838. This venture was somewhat more successful than the first one, as the

¹⁾ Pantagraph, Jan. 14, 1857. Interview with Henry Fell, May 31, 1913.

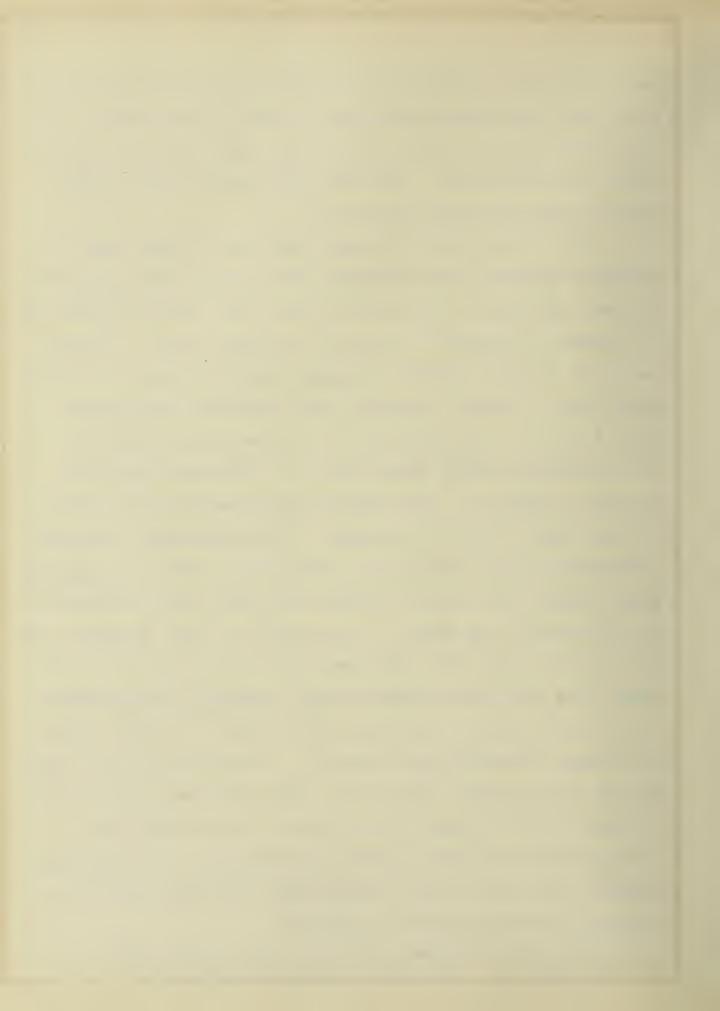


paper continued to appear for over a year, until conditions caused by the hard times forced Fell again to stop its publication. The last number appeared in June, 1839, after which Bloomington had no paper for several years. Fell sold the printing outfit, which tradition says was moved to Peoria.1

The recovery from the severe depression of 1837 seems to have been especially slow in McLean County, where land speculation had been very brisk. Not until 1845 was there found a man who had In that the courage to undertake to publish a newspaper there. year R. B. Mitchell started the McLean County Register, but shortly gave it up to Charles P. Merriman, who established The Western Whig, a weekly. He associated R. H. Johnson with him late in 1849, and early in 1850 Johnson and I. N. Underwood became proprietors and editors. They associated Merriman with them again somewhat later for about six months. This arrangement terminated on November 19, 1851, at the end of the fifth volume of The Western Whig, when Mr. Fell and Mr. Merriman undertook the joint management and editorship of the paper. A new outfit of type, brought up the Illinois River and carted over from Pekin, was purchased, and the name of the publication changed to The Bloomington Intelligencer. This partnership was in turn dissolved on March 17, 1852, when Mr. Fell became sole editor and publisher. He managed the paper until the end of that volume, November 17, 1852, and then retired, being succeeded by Mr. Merriman as sole owner. Mr. Merriman was a classical scholar of some repute, and changed the name to The Pantagraph, a name under which it has become well known and very influential throughout Central Illinois.2

¹⁾ The Democratic Press was established there in Feb. 1840.

²⁾ Lewis Life, 38. The issue of The Western Whig for Dec. 11,

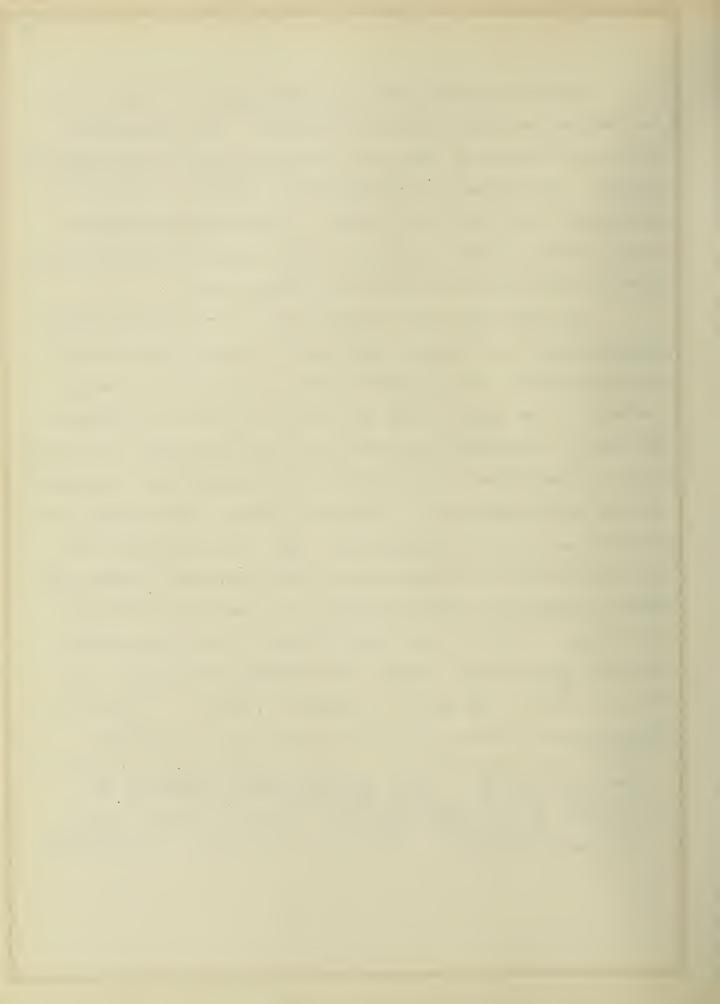


Fell's connection with The Pantagraph did not cease with the termination of his official editorship. His name appeared as late as February 9, 1853, as contributing editor of The Intelligencer. As a medium for moulding public opinion, he found it a useful ally, and wrote for it often. Its editors and managers found in him a constant source of helpful suggestions, and seem to have consulted him on questions of business policy.

Intelligencer, his newspaper work was of this occasional and unofficial nature. During the Civil War, his interest in reform centered in the struggle then waging, but afterward he cherished the hope of establishing at Normal some kind of journal which might become the mouthpiece of the different reform movements always more or less before the public. Interesting some of his friends, he purchased an outfit for publishing a paper, and was rapidly completing plans for its appearance when he learned that Scibird and Waters, proprietors of the Pantagraph, were seeking a buyer for their paper. He had already carried negotiations for an editor for his proposed paper, through correspondence with Greeley and others, almost to the point of engaging Dr. Weil. But as the Pantagraph had already a wide circulation and a considerable

^{1847,} is no. 6 of Vol. II. It was published at No. 3 Brick Row, Front Street. Scott, Newspapers and Periodicals of Illinois, 27. (Ill. Hist. Col. VI.)

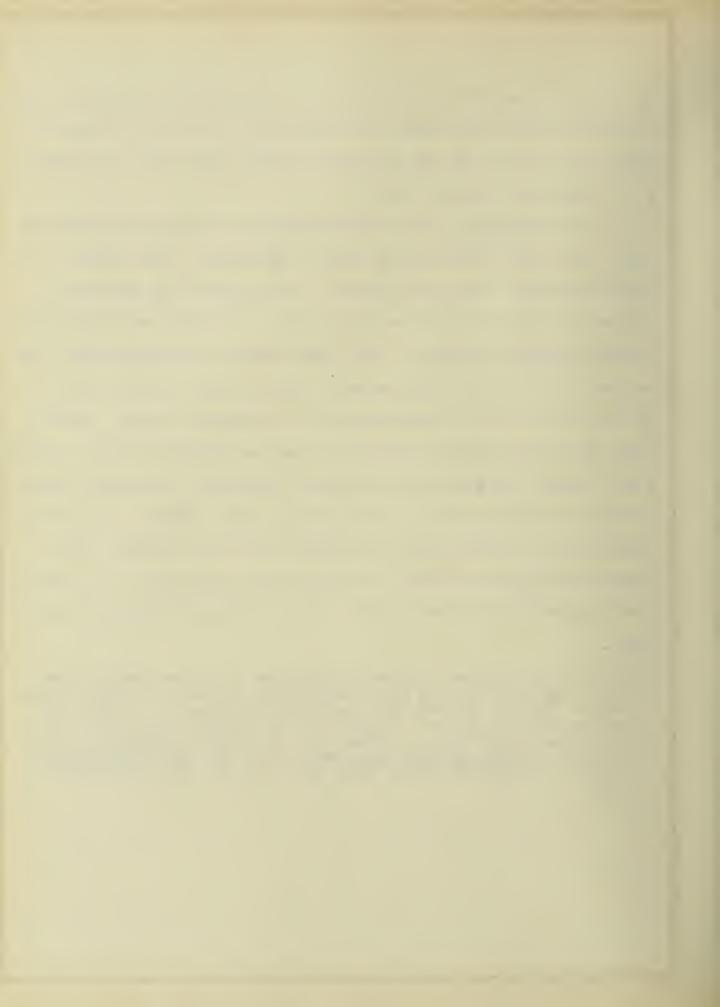
¹⁾ T. Tilton to Fell, Nov. 24, 1868. In this letter Dr. Weil, "Long ... known to Mr. Bungay and Mr. Greeley," is recommended for the editorship.



influence, it was far more valuable to a man with a propaganda than any newly established sheet could be, and Mr. Fell, with James P. Taylor and his son-in-law, William O. Davis, made haste to secure it. This was in August, 1868.

The Pantagraph was a Republican organ of moderate partizanship. Mr. Fell abandoned the idea of making Mr. Weil editor, deciding to fill that post himself. He entered into editorial duties with zest, perhaps remembering his experience with the ultraethical Eclectic Observer. Mr. Davis became business manager, but he found his father-in-law somewhat impracticable chief, by far too idealistic for the environment of a newspaper office. Moreover, the confinement of office life was as irksome as ever. After a few months, he gave up the editorial management, which was taken over by his old friend, Dr. E. R. Roe, in June, 1869.1 Mr. Fell retained his connection with the paper until late October, 1870, when he sold out his entire interest to his son-in-law. Mr. Taylor also disposed of his share to Mr. Davis, leaving Bloomington shortly after.

¹⁾ Dr. Roe had entered the Federal army as "a bitter Jackson Democrat" and came back "a Black Republican." He was made a major, then a colonel, in the army, and was very popular. Upon his return, he was elected a deputy in the circuit clerk's office, following Lyman Burr. Lyman Burr in the Daily Bulletin, July 6, 1913; the Bloomington Democrat, Sept. 30, 1864; Pantagraph, Oct. 1, 3, 1864; Aug. 12, 1868; Nov. 1, 1870; March 13; Oct. 23, 1871.



Founding the Normal School. (1853-1860)

The advocates of free public schools in Illinois secured a law authorizing but not establishing them, as early as 1825. This law was so amended as practically to annul it two years later, and Illinois was without an effective public-school system until 1855. The desire for an effective public-school law took definite form after an impromptu conference at Bloomington by three men who realized the need of the state and were disposed to take measures to relieve it. These men were J. A. Hawley of Dixon, H. H. Lee of Chicago, and Daniel Wilkins of Bloomington. They issued a call to all friends of free schools, for a meeting to be held at Bloomington on December 26-28, 1853. The call was signed by the secretary of state, who had charge of all educational affairs in those days, by the presidents and faculties of two of the leading colleges in the state - Shurtless and Illinois Wesleyan - by the clergymen of Bloomington, and by others who were interested. E. W. Brewster of Elgin was made president of the conference, which was large and enthusiastic. Every man who had a solution to offer for the educational problems of the state, was there with his resolutions, his friends, and his arguments.1

Several of the principles embodied in the resolutions passed at that meeting were afterward incorporated in the state law, and

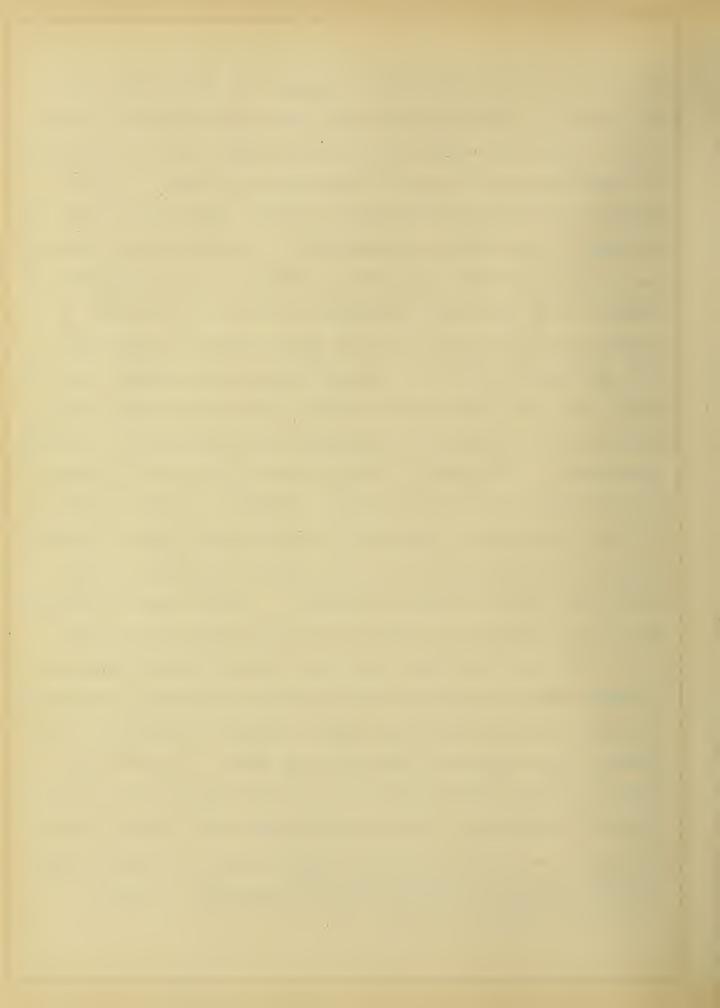
¹⁾ State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, I: 127-138; Illinois Teacher, I; 321-328. The convention here described was not the first of an educational nature in the state, but the first that concerned itself especially with the common school system. Illinois Teacher, I, 328-336.



have been largely instrumental in shaping the educational policy They included a plan for a State Teacher's Institute, afterward the State Teacher's Association, which was carried out immediately and has been in operation ever since. called for a state superintendent of schools, who should devote all his time to the interests of education. Authorized by a new state law, Governor Matteson appointed, on February 9, 1854, Ninian W. Edwards as the first superintendent of schools in Illinois. A third resolution was in favor of a journal devoted to education. This periodical, called the Illinois Teacher, was started after the Peoria meeting of 1854, with a curious scheme of editorial management by which a different man was made responsible for its contents each month. The result of this division of labor was an uncertain quality of content and financial disaster. After a year's trial of this plan Mr. Charles E. Hovey of Peoria, one of a valiant group of New Englanders who were the educational leaders of the state then, was made editor and manager. He was vigorous and able, and put the publication speedily and effectively upon its feet.

Then there came up a question which was bound to cause a discussion, for it involved the fundamental differences of men whose training and ideals gave them widely diverging conceptions of the needs and the consequent policies of the state. This was the question of the establishment of some institution for the better training of teachers. All were agreed that such a school could, in this new and growing country, accomplish the end sought in the

¹⁾ Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, I: 146,7; Illinois Teacher, I; 8-18.



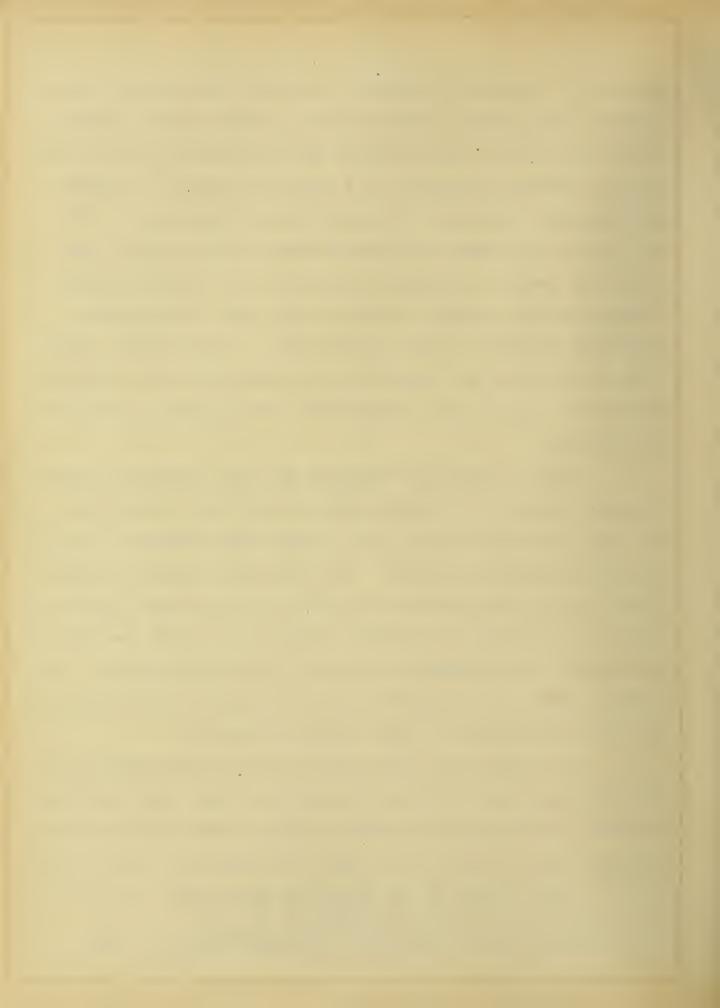
hest way. Jonathan B. Turner, from whose fertile brain came the vast and comprehensive scheme resulting finally in the founding of the great state universities of the Middle and Far West, was trying to awaken enthusiasm for a combination school to include agricultural, industrial, and normal school departments. The friends of the already established denominational schools, who feared the results of separating education and religion by the founding of state schools, wished to add normal departments to Shurtleff, McKendrie, Knox, and Wesleyan. A third group, armed with the record of the normal schools of Massachusetts, strongly advocated a separate and "untrammeled" training-school exclusively for teachers. 2

Jonathan Turner had organized the State Industrial League, a society working for a state industrial college, and numbered Mr. Fell, who was director of the McLean County division, among his sympathizers and helpers. Fell was eager to see the industrial colleges established, but knowing that the normal school was both the more popular and the more immediately needed, was willing to wait for the realization of the more comprehensive plan. With Turner, he bent his energies toward uniting the educational forces for the accomplishment of some one definite object.

The various ideas were further discussed and worked over at a meeting held at Peoria, in December of 1854. At this third meeting, in Springfield, it became plain that the advocates of a separate normal school were strongly in the majority, and the next

¹⁾ E. J. James, Origin of the Land Grant Act of 1862, pp. 25-27. (University of Illinois, Studies, IV, no. 7.)

²⁾ Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, II, p. 52.
3) The McLean County division was organized February 9, 1854.



year, at Chicago, they secured the passage of a resolution to the effect that the association did not wish "to discuss any university question, but occupy themselves with the interests of common schools and Normal schools." Mr. Turner, whose visions of the future did not blind him to immediate demands and practical methods, yielded his own larger plan with a grace made possible by his great faith in its ultimate realization; and the association passed a resolution which called for an appropriation for "the immediate establishment of a State Normal School for the education of teachers."

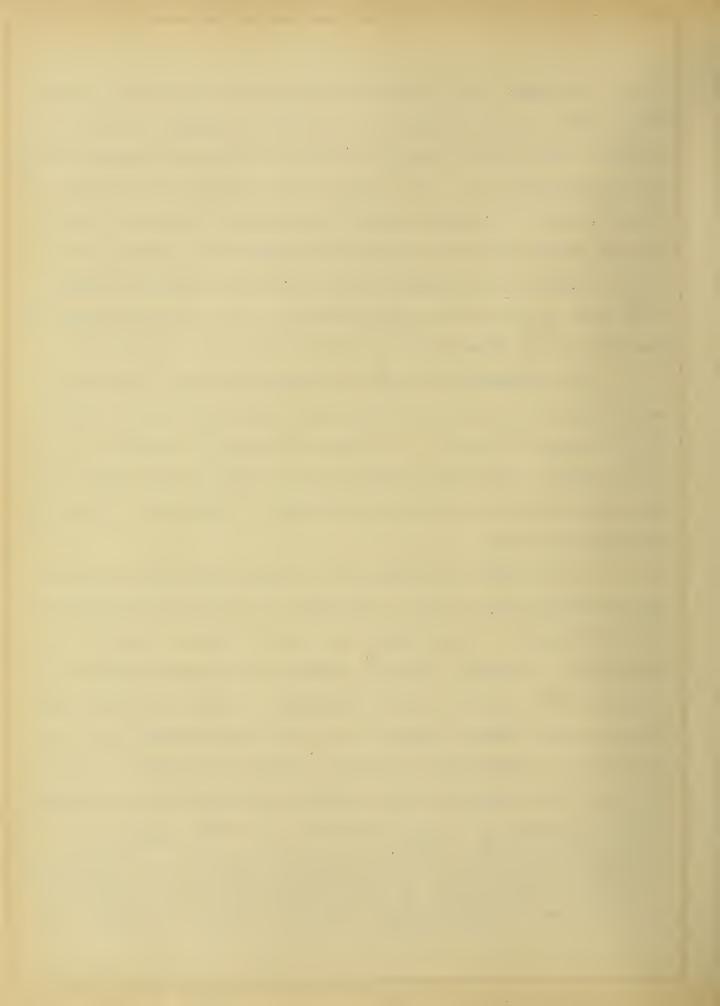
The legislature, which had already (in 1855) established a free school system, passed the desired law, and Bissell signed it on February 18, 1857. The law designated the members of the state board of education who were put in charge of the affairs of the school, but did not state its location, which was to be decided by competitive bids.

It was after the passing of this law that Fell's interest in the normal school became intensified by the hope of securing it for Bloomington. Long before this, he had hoped to see an institution of learning, the exact nature of which was not clear to himself, in the town of North Bloomington. Upon his return from Payson he had become a member of the first incorporated board of trustees of the Wesleyan University, serving until 1857. Now he saw in the projected normal school an opportunity for realizing

¹⁾ Superintendent of Public Instruction, pp. 53ff, Reports, II. Illinois Teacher, I, 254.

²⁾ His greatest service to the institution lay in his influence in changing its location from what is now Miller Park on the outskirts of Bloomington, to the central site which it occupies.

James Shaw in Fell Memorial, 4; John F. Eberhart in ibid., 19.

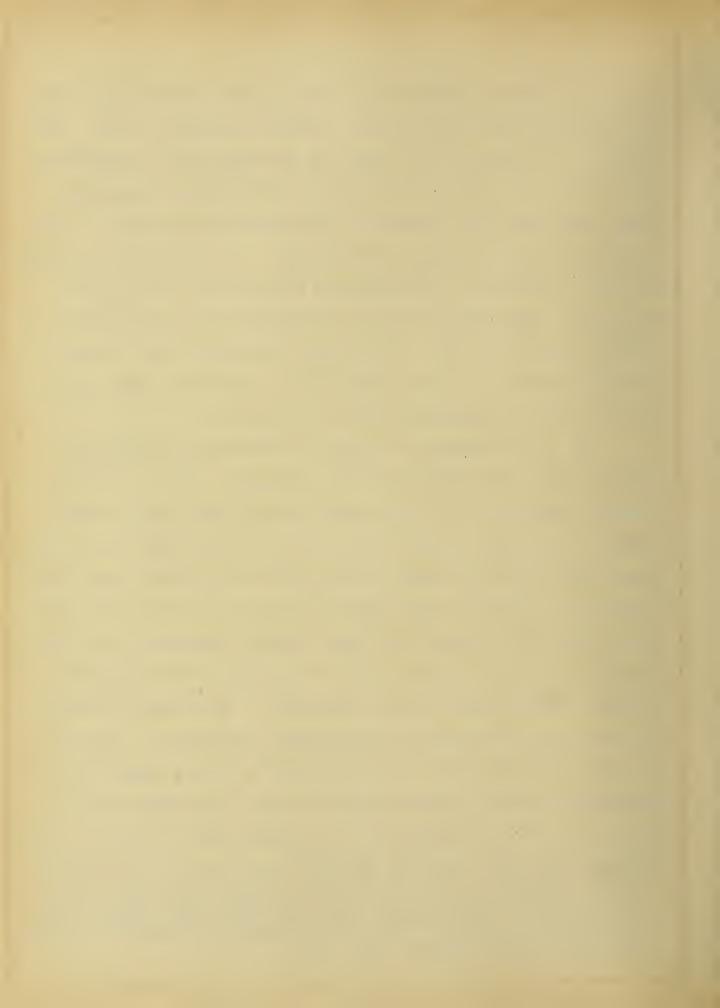


quickly his dream of making North Bloomington a school town, and so attracting to it the class of citizens he wanted to have. The site for the "Seminary" had long been selected; but he abandoned it in favor of a larger tract farther removed from Bloomington.

Other people had other ideas as to what was the best site. Five, besides the one he favored, were offered. The other five, however, had less in the way of subscriptions attached than the one he advocated. This was part of the Parkinson farm of 350 acres, owned at that time by Dr. Joseph Payne and Meshac Pike, who had recently bought it. David Davis and E. W. Bakewell added each about 40 acres, which made about 160 acres in all.

Mr. Fell carried on the work of securing subscriptions, aided by others who reported to him regularly. Rev. E. S. Mc-Caughey, principal of a flourishing private school, was a chief helper. The amount of the subscription was kept out of the newspapers, and very little said of the matter where rival towns might hear of it. Anything that might be used was solicited; and land, cash, notes, even nursery stock and freight donations, were given. Friends of popular education outside the state were appealed to by some, although few, if any, responded. As is usual, many of the offers were saddled with embarrassing conditions. One set of offers stipulated that the site should be within a mile of Bloomington; another, that it must be within three-quarters of a mile of the railroad crossing at North Bloomington; another, within

¹⁾ Among these, was Alexander Campbell, the founder of the Church of the Disciples. He seems to have beenfavorably inclined at first, but later declined to help. Thirty years after, Fell attributed this to Campbell's statement that "Mr. Bakewell and wife had done enough." Bakewell had married Campbell's daughter Campbell to Fell, Bethany, Va., 1857.

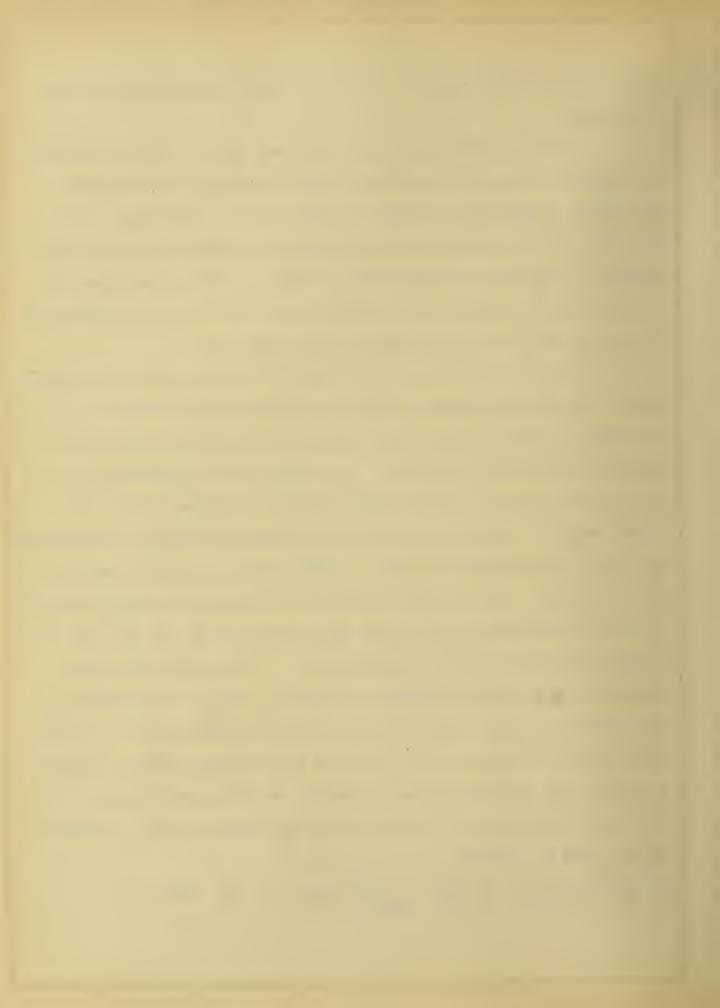


three miles of Bloomington. Mr. Fell's site satisfied all these conditions.

Meantime, other towns had not been idle. Batavia offered a ready-made plant in the grounds and buildings of the Batavia Institute, and fifteen thousand dollars cash. Washington, in Tazewell County, offered the buildings and grounds of Washington Academy, with twelve hundred dollars cash. Peoria was known to be piling up a considerable subscription, but no one in Bloomington could find out just how formilable this rival was.

It was at this point that John F. Eberhart gave substantial He was a teacher who had been forced by ill-health to give up regular classroom work, and who spent much time in holding institutes throughout the state. This gave him an opportunity to know conditions well, and he was greatly interested in the new normal school. He met Mr. Fell first when attending an educational meeting in Bloomington in 1855 or 1856, when he was entertained at the Fell home. The two men became fast friends, and when Eberhart found out how keenly Fell wanted the normal school for his own town, he was minded to give all possible aid. This resolution was strengthened by his own dislike of Peoria, which he considered undesirable because it was "a river town and a whiskey town". entered into the contest for Fell and Bloomington, even as Simeon W. Wright was entering it as a champion of Hovey and Peoria. about three months he worked with Fell in McLean County, a guest at his home and party to all his plans.2

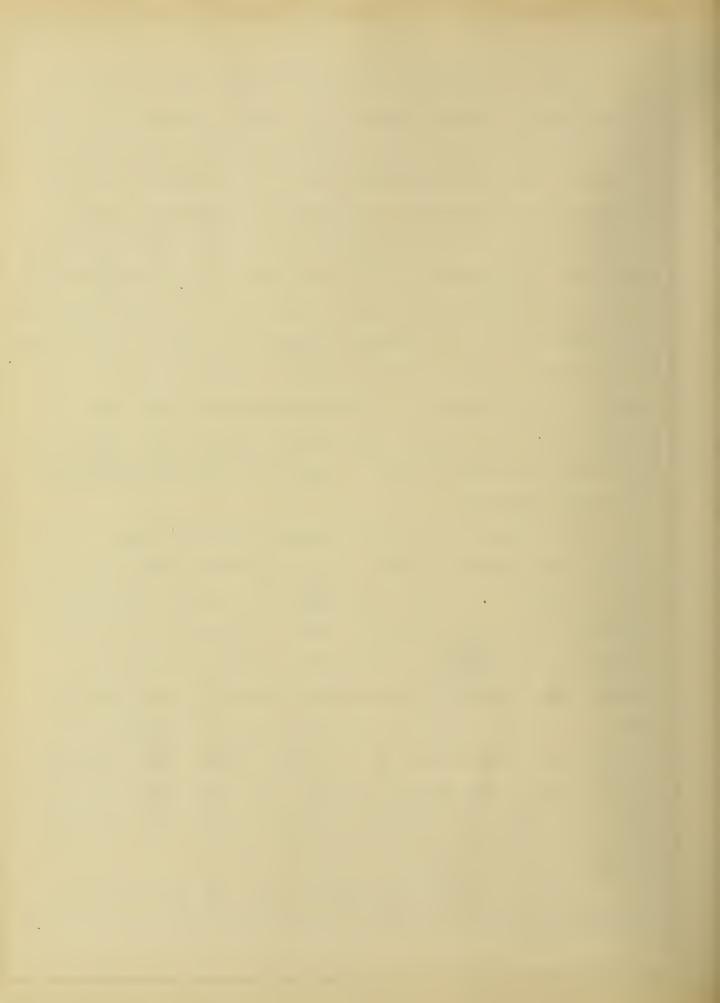
¹⁾ Superintendent of Public Instruction, II: pp. 286-291.
2) John Eberhart, in Fell Memorial, 23.



About a week before the final decision was to be made,
Eberhart made a trip to Peoria to see clearly just what the situation there was; and was fortunate enough to meet there a friend,
a teacher, who in his enthusiasm told him the amount of the subscription already secured. Returning to Bloomington at once, he
told Fell that it would be necessary to raise the Bloomington subscription. Fell asked him if a ten thousand dollar advance would
be sufficient, and Eberhart said it would have to be more than that.
Fell suggested fifteen thousand, but Eberhart repeated that it must
be still more. Fell inquired if twenty thousand would do, and
received the same reply. But when he asked if twenty-five
thousand would cap Peoria's bid, Eberhart replied that such a bid
would secure the normal school. And Fell vowed that Bloomington
would raise the money.

But he wanted to see for himself just how things were at Peoria, since Eberhart's sense of honor prevented him from telling him the details. He knew that a powerful stimulus, combined with knowledge of the real situation, would be necessary if his townsmen were to be persuaded to raise their already generous bid. Eberhart had brought him the news from Peoria on Friday, May 3, 1857. At Fell's request, he set off at once for Chicago, to interview the three members of the board resident there, in the interests of the Bloomington location. If these men were at all unfriendly, they were effectively won over by Eberhart during the week-end he spent in Chicago.

Meantime, having seen Eberhart off, Fell harnessed Tom to the buggy and set off for Peoria, where he knew there was to be a

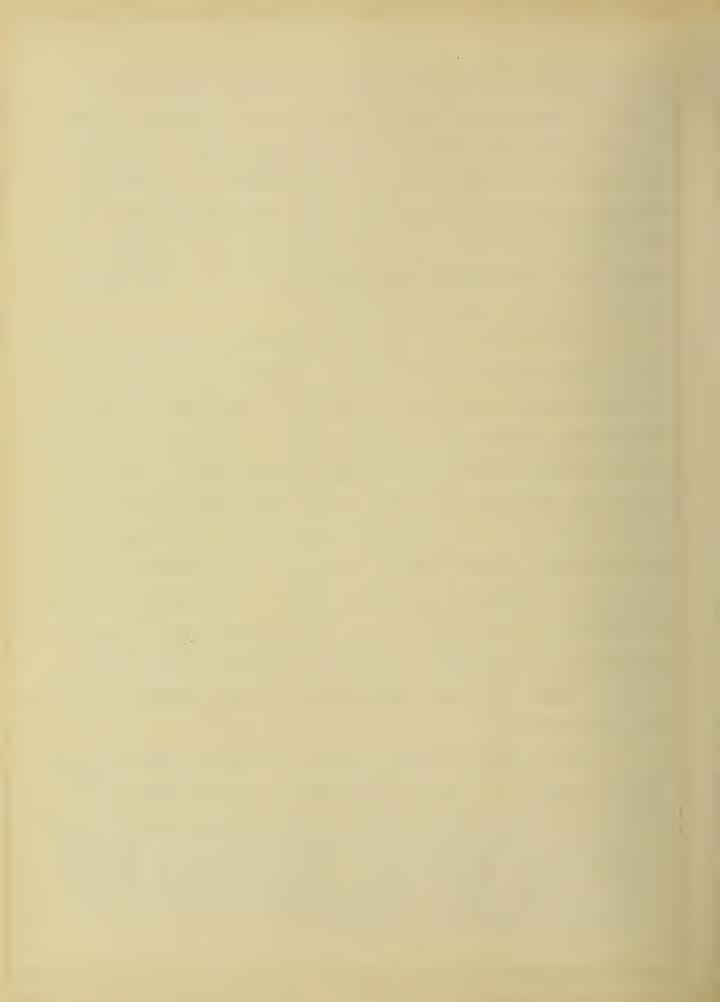


citizens' mass meeting that night. He covered the forty-five miles in time to attend the meeting, and was observed by people who knew him in the crowd. No attempt was made to keep secret the amount of the subscription at this meeting. The jubilant committee, sure that in the short time left no competitor could equal their offerings, were not alarmed even at the sight of their chief rival's appearance - an apparition that would have meant more to them had they known him better.

It was late when the meeting adjourned, but early the next morning Fell was back in Bloomington, briskly presenting to the leading citizens the somewhat appalling dictum that an additional twenty-five thousand must be subscribed. He began by raising his own cash subscription to two thousand dollars, with seventy-five hundred in Jackson County lands, worth about five dollars an acre. Others caught his enthusiasm and added to their subscriptions until the individual pledges, already totaling fifty thousand dollars, amounted to seventy-one thousand dollars. The county commissioners who had before subscribed for the county a sum equal to the private subscriptions, now added to the swamp lands already promised, enough to bring the whole amount raised to one hundred and forty-one thousand dollars.

The meeting of the board was to be held at Peoria on the seventh of May. A tour of inspection to the proposed site at

¹⁾ The three county commissioners who risked their popularity and tenure of office to secure the normal school (for the pledge had to be made without recourse to vote) were A. J. Merriman, Milton Smith, and Hiram Buck. They were reelected that fall, but were superceded by a board of supervisors which ratified their action in May. Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, II, Appendix, 22, 371-2.



"the Junction", as Normal was commonly called then, preceded the meeting. The weather had been very rainy and the bare Illinois prairie about Bloomington was a hopeless swamp, not liable to make a favorable impression upon critical visitors. Mr. Fell had been over the ground carefully the night before, had found every mudhole and every dry ridge, and had mapped out a course for the carriages intended to minimize the danger of being mired in a bottomless pit of Illinois mud. When the board made its tour of inspection, Fell rode in the first carriage, and personally directed the driver over the uncharted, soggy ground. The drivers of the other carriages had orders to follow the first undeviatingly on pain of losing life and wages, and on no account to allow the horses to become mired. So conducted, the board made a safe trip to the site and were returned to the station without accident. The young trees planted along the streets of North Bloomington made a good impression upon them, it is recorded. From the proposed site they went to the station, where they were to board the train for Peoria. Some half dozen Bloomingtonians and a reporter accompanied them.

At Peoria there was a similar inspection of the site offered after which the board sat publicly at the court house. The Bloomington bid was accepted, with conditions attached to secure the somewhat precarious county subscription, which had to be guaranteed by citizens. Over eighty prominent Bloomingtonians signed this

2) "Report of the State Board of Education," in Supt. of Pub. Instruction, II: 359-364.

¹⁾ This reporter was Edward J. Lewis, later editor of the Pantagraph, and Fell's lifelong friend. The account given, with many incidents not here noted, is found in his MS. Life of Fell. Weekly Pantagraph, May 27, 1857.



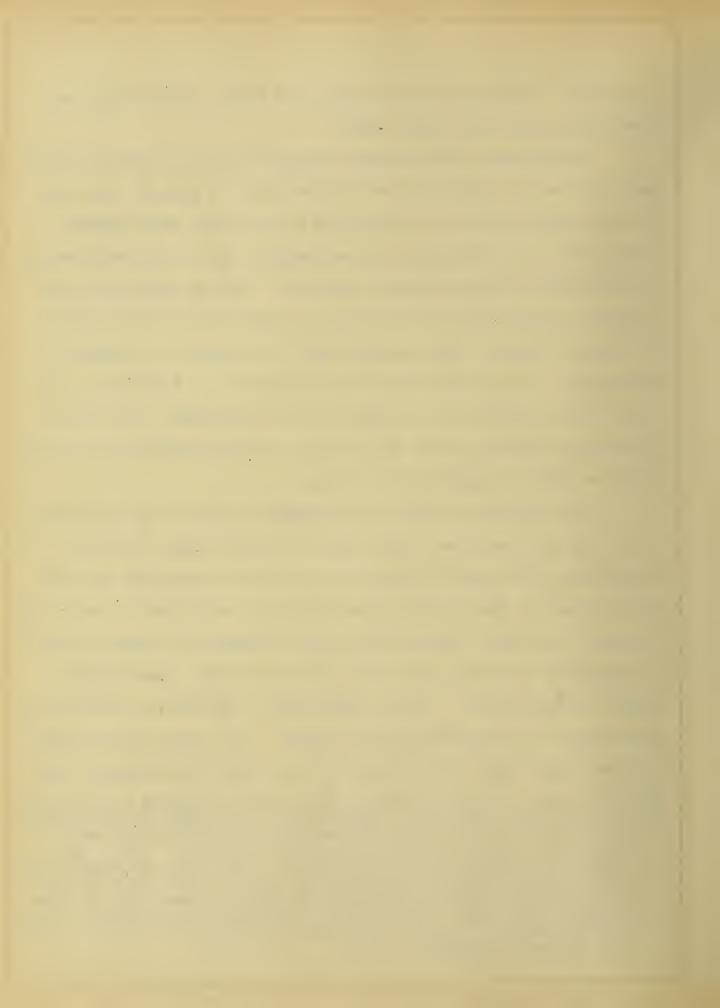
guarantee. Abraham Lincoln drew up the bond, and the money was eventually paid to the last cent. 1

Bloomington was exultant when Fell and his friends brought back to them the news that they had won the new school, and plans for the town that would in time grow up about it, were rampant. Ground for the building was broken promptly, the cornerstone being laid September 29 with all due ceremony. Fell's address on that occasion revealed his own conception of the future of the school. He hoped it might in time become what, for reasons of financial expediency, it was then called: a university. Especially, he hoped that an agricultural school with an experiment farm would eventually became part of the school, and that mechanical courses might be added as opportunity offered.

The question of the principalship was made a lively issue.

Fell, who was a warm personal friend of Horace Mann, had long cherished in his heart the hope of securing his services for the needful West. When planning the "Seminary" which was to have been located on the east side of the present Broadway in Normal, he had corresponded with Mann and others relative to its constitution, scope and curriculum. He now asked Mann if he would consider the presidency of the proposed normal school. Mr. Mann was favorably disposed, and before the location of the school had actually been

¹⁾ State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports II,pp.373-8.
2) The new school was to be financed from the income of the college and seminary fund, then about ten thousand dollars per year, which was permanently diverted for this purpose. Many, not without good ground, objected to this, and it was to answer their representations that the singularly inappropriate name of the Illinois State Normal University was used, a name that has been retained even after the founding of the state university. State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports I, p. 123; II, p. 276; Illinois Teacher III, 395.

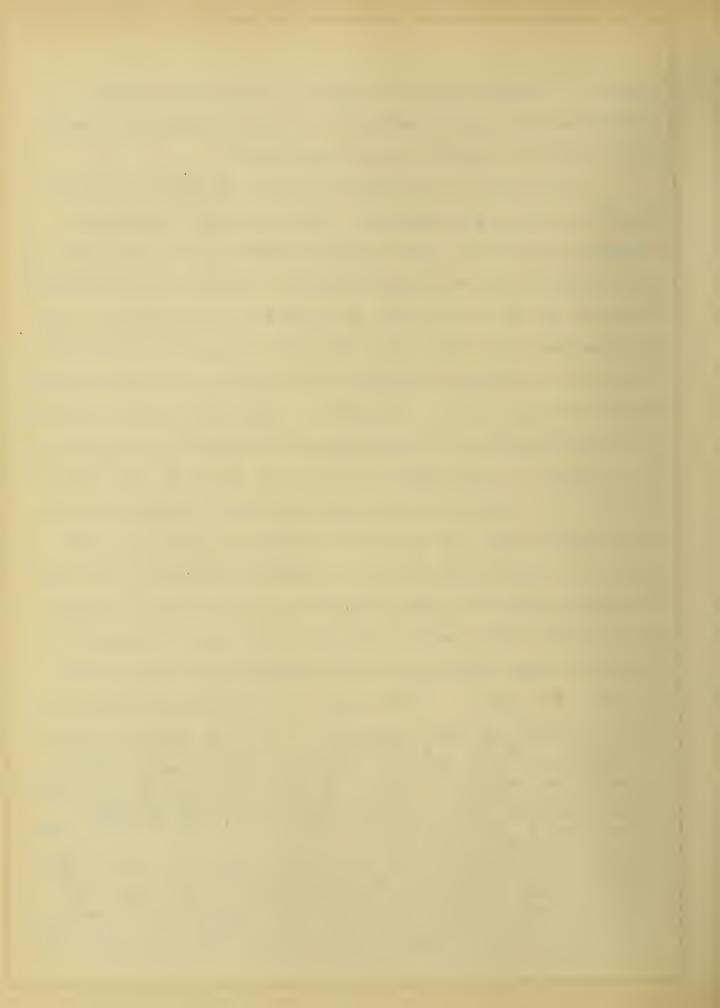


secured, a subscription list signed by Bloomington citizens, promised material aid in raising the salary of Horace Mann were he to become the head of the new institution.

The meeting of the Board at which a "principal" was to be elected was held in Bloomington. Shortly before the time of meeting, Simeon Wright came to John F. Eberhart, who with Fell led the pro-Mann party, and told him that it was a matter of political necessity that an Illinois man be elected to the position. "If you elect Mann we'll kill him, " said this advocate of local sovereignty; and he further intimated that Hovey was the only man acceptable to the politicians in question. When the situation was made known to Horace Mann, he telegraphed to Eberhart that he would not be a candidate for the place if there were to be any fight connected with it. Since Fell was equally opposed to dissensions at this critical time, and realized thoroughly the need of united support for the principle of the struggling institution, the plan of securing Horace Mann was reluctantly given up by its friends, and the Middle West lost the strength which might have accrued to its first normal school through the leadership of the greatest educator of his day. After Mann, Mr. Hovey was generally con-

2) It has been suggested that the liberal religious views of Mann were largely responsible for that disapproval which resulted in the vigorous opposition to his presidency at this time, the powerful Methodist faction in the state considering him a dangerous leader of the young in spite of his ability. Certain it is that his abolitionist leanings aroused antipathy among that

The subscription list, dated May 1, 1857, was signed by Jesse W. Fell, K. H. Fell, W. H. Allin, C. W. Holder, Jos. Payne, John Magoun, F. K. Phoenix, John Dietrich, E. Thomas, McCann Davis, and amounted to \$750. Mr. Mann had agreed to accept the presidency at \$2500. John F. Eberhart, in Fell Memorial, 24, and Interview, June 20, 1913; Mann to Fell, June 23, 1856, President F. Wayland of Brown University to Fell, Jan. 29, 1853. Illinois Teacher, III, 107.
 It has been suggested that the liberal religious views of Mann



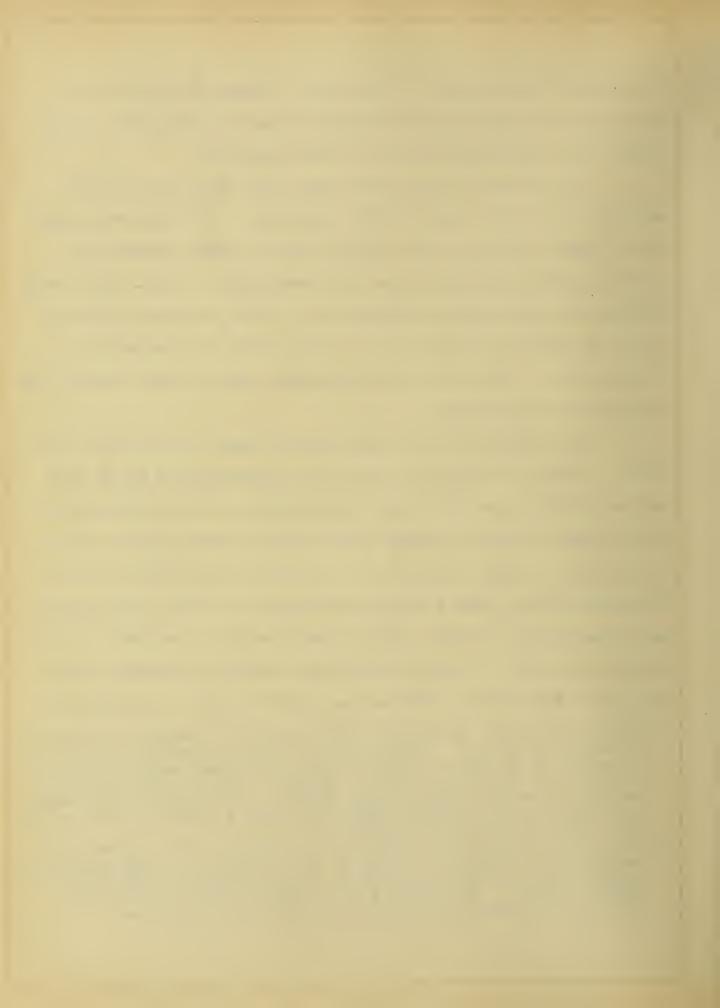
sidered the best man for the position, although Eberhart, who declined the nomination, and Phelps were also considered. On the final vote, Hovey was elected by a bare majority.

Once elected, Hovey set to work with great energy and ability to make the normal school a success. The task was a hard one. School opened in the historic Major's Hall, perched atop a grocery store on Front Street in Bloomington. There were twenty-nine pupils onthe opening day October 5, 1857, and more followed soon, the total enrollment for the year being one hundred and twenty-seven. There were two assistants, and a "model school" for observation and practice.

The troubles of the normal school began with the panic of 1857. Many of the men who led in the subscriptions found themselves unable to pay what they had promised, and the commissioners were unable to sell the swamp lands that had been counted upon so confidently. Even the title to these lands was found to be uncertain, and Fell made a trip to Washington to secure the complete and formal deed, in order that the lands might be available in case buyers appeared. He returned on the second of November, with word that the official confirmation would be sent to Springfield

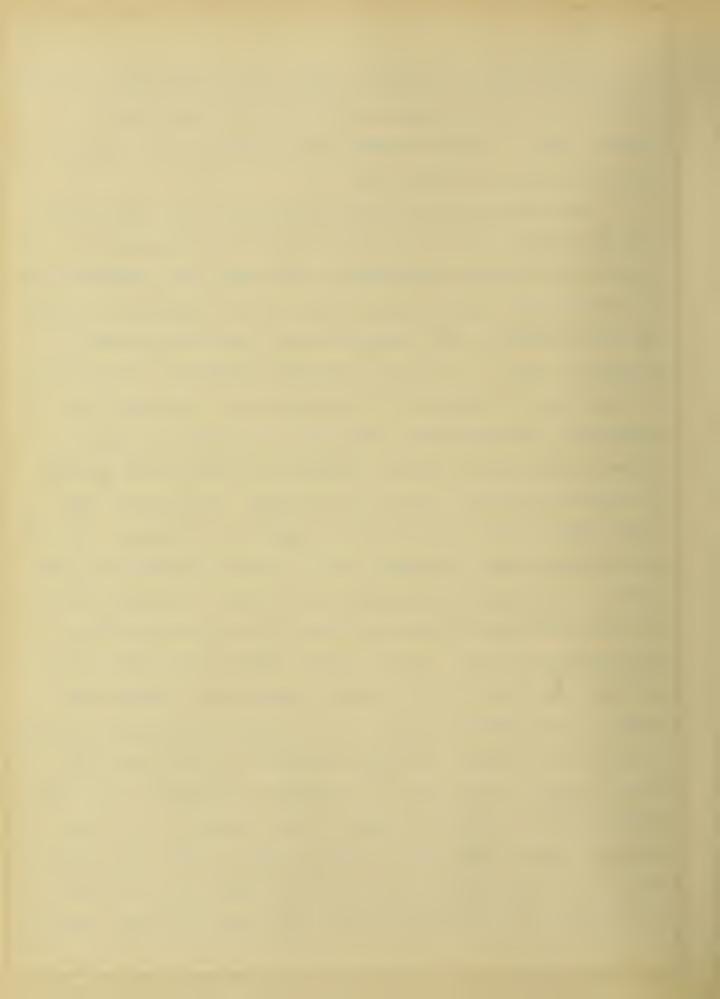
large number who sympathized with slavery or feared to have the question agitated. Pro-slavery advocates especially remembered a speech of Mr. Mann in which he had vigorously assailted the Compromise of 1850 and Daniel Webster. These considerations, with the powerful forces which Charles Hovey was able to command in support of his own candidacy, were quite sufficient to defeat the large-visioned plan of Fell.

¹⁾ In August, 1855, being unable to go himself, Fell had sent his son Henry, now grown to manhood, to Washington to look after the school warrants for Illinois, W. F. M. Arny being then in the patent office. He (Henry Fell) remained until the last of October, and was moderately successful in his mission.



New complications rose, however, after he left Washington, and the patents for the thirty thousand acres were not issued until January, 1858. The last payment on the pledge from the county lands were paid in October, 1864.

The uncertainly of realizing money from the county grant, with the scarcity of money in general and the unwillingness of one or two of the wealthy land-owners to turn over their promised acres at the time when they were most needed, made it impossible to make the first payment to the contractors, and work was suspended in December of 1857. Of all the thousands subscribed, not even six or seven could be collected for immediate use. The ingenious expedients of Charles Hovey during the dark days that ensued included every possible scheme for making something out of nothing. The school was without money, without credit, and without that public support which comes with the tradition of success. Some of its opponents began to suggest that so apparent a failure be abandoned. A few stanch friends upheld the hands of President Hovey at this time, risking their own property by signing the notes it was necessary to make. These men were Charles and Richard Holder, and Jesse and Kersey Fell. Messrs. Rex and S. W. Moulton also helped, giving personal notes. The merchants of Bloomington stood loyally by the school, furnishing materials on credit upon the basis of Hovey's faith that the succeeding legislature would make appropriations to cover all debts. This was done at the next session, and work was resumed in the spring of 1859. The school moved into its new building in the fall of 1860, and on October 5 of that year the last brick was laid, with short speeches, cheers,



and a free picnic lunch for all.

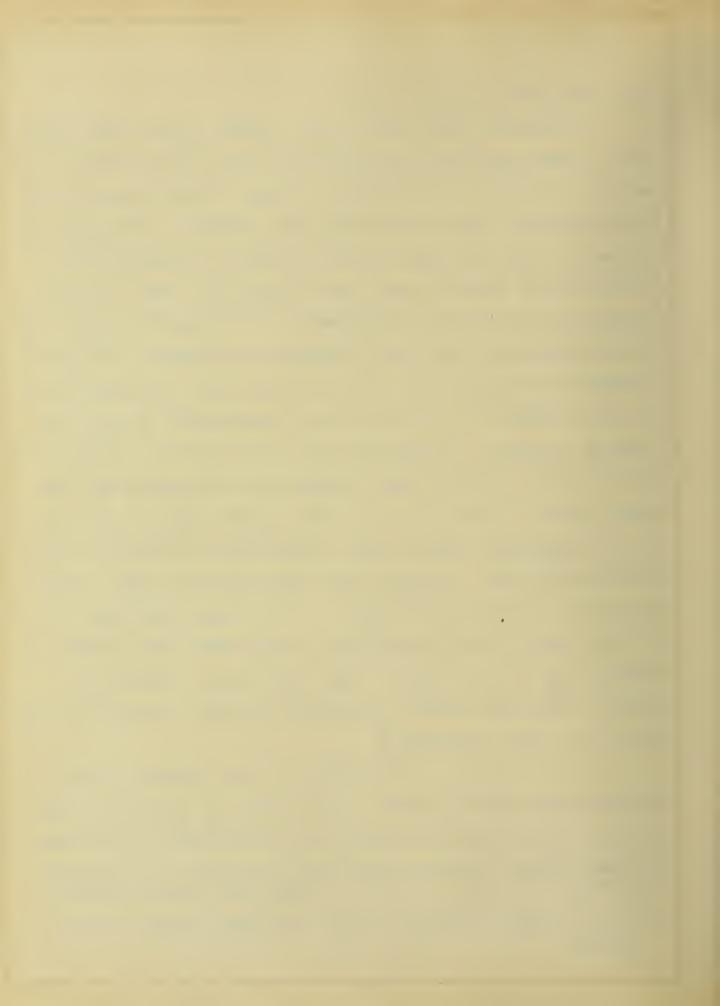
It seemed to Fell and to other friends of the normal school, that a formal dedication of the building would call attention to it and gain it friends and influence. It was a time of great anxiety and uncertainty, and there were some who hesitated to take time and expense for such an occasion during a period of national peril. The dedication, however, which was on January 30, 1860, not only gained the end for which it was planned, but afforded a relief from the tense anxiety of the time, a comforting assurance of at least one great good accomplished, which gave heart and encouragement to all who attended it. Mr. Fell worked indefatigably to make the Invitations were sent to all the prominent men occasion a success. in the state, and great crowds attended from Bloomington and the nearby towns. It was one of the first normal schools built west of the Alleghanies, and the first state-endowed educational institution in Illinois. Governor Yates and ex-Governor Bebb of Ohio were there, and many lesser stars. The speeches were given in the great hall of the new building, and the feast which crowned the occasion was in Royce's Hall. Mrs. Fell and her cousin, Mrs. Holder, planned and managed the banquet, at which the mayor presided and Mr. Fell was toastmaster.2

Fell's interest in the school continued always, and for many years was actively shown. He attended the public meetings, encouraged the literary societies, and superintended the planting

VII, 78.

¹⁾ Superintendent of Public Instruction, Reports, II: pp. 99-103.
2) Newspaper clippings, undated, in Scrap Book; Illinois Teacher,

³⁾ G. B. Robinson, secretary of the Wrightonian Society, to Fell, April 30, 1861. Mr. Fell became an honorary member of this Society.



of the campus, of which more in another chapter. Through the years of its gradual growth and establishment he was regularly the man who secured the necessary appropriations at Springfield.

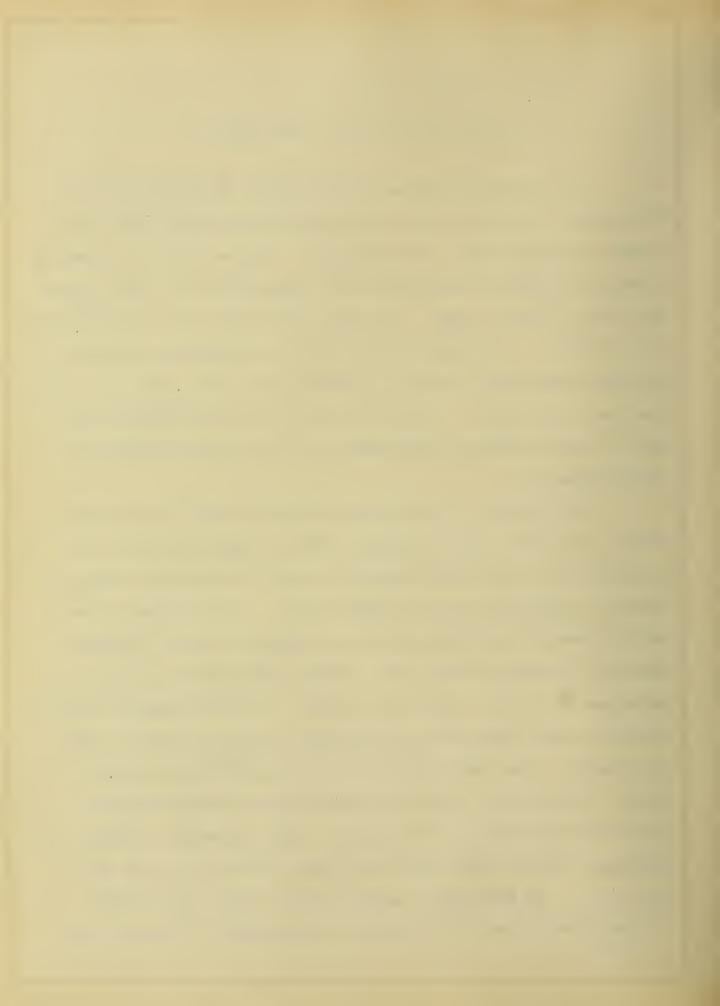


Political Activities. (1840-1860).

The strong admiration which Fell had for Henry Clay led him to take a prominent part in local politics during the first years of his residence in Bloomington. He was never of those who consider politics so inherently and ineradicably evil that honest men have no part in them. Politics interested him in an absorbing way at times. He used the machinery of government as a way of securing good ends, and also probably with a keen appreciation of the fun of the game. And he was one of the few men who never ask or receive material compensation for their participation in public affairs. 1

Until 1840, his political activities seem to have been mainly along the line of securing various improvements for the districts in which he was interested, and in urging the election of men in favor of internal improvements. In that year he was much in demand for stump speeches throughout central Illinois, where the campaign lacked none of that picturesqueness which characterized it in the country as a whole. On one occasion a monster procession was organized in Bloomington, to go to Peoria, forty miles away. The chef-d'oeuvre of the expedition was a great canon - Black Betty - drawn by twelve horses, and with twelve veterans of the War of 1812 upon it. The procession stopped at Mackinaw, Tremont, Washington, and other towns on the way for meetings. At Washington, after Fell and others had spoken,

¹⁾ James Ewing, Memorial Address to Bloomington Bar Association, 1887.



General Gridley was called upon for s speech, and responded acceptably. The possibility of entering political life appealed to General Gridley, and that fall he was nominated and elected to the lower house at Springfield. Fell advised him the next year to study law, and had afterward the pleasure of seeing him very successful in this profession. The friendship between these two men was cemented by mutual service and sacrifice, for part of the debts for which General Gridley filed a petition of bankruptcy in 1842 were contracted as security for Fell and others in enterprises in which both were interested. Fell was able later amply to compensate his friend for his devotion, but he never forgot the service rendered at the time of the great panic.

Beside the speaking, Fell reached the people by means of a circular letter, dated January 20, 1840, which set forth the evils of the Jackson regime and the necessity for reform in the person and under the leadership of General Harrison. The document is in the somewhat pompous phraseology of that day, but direct, pointed, and dignified - the latter a characteristic rare enough to be appreciated, in the Western campaign literature of that day. It called a meeting at Bloomington on February 22.

Fell's position upon the question of repudiation is worthy of comment. The financial panic of 1837 was of an unequaled severity throughout the Middle West, and its effects lasted well into the next decade. Men who were able to weather the first

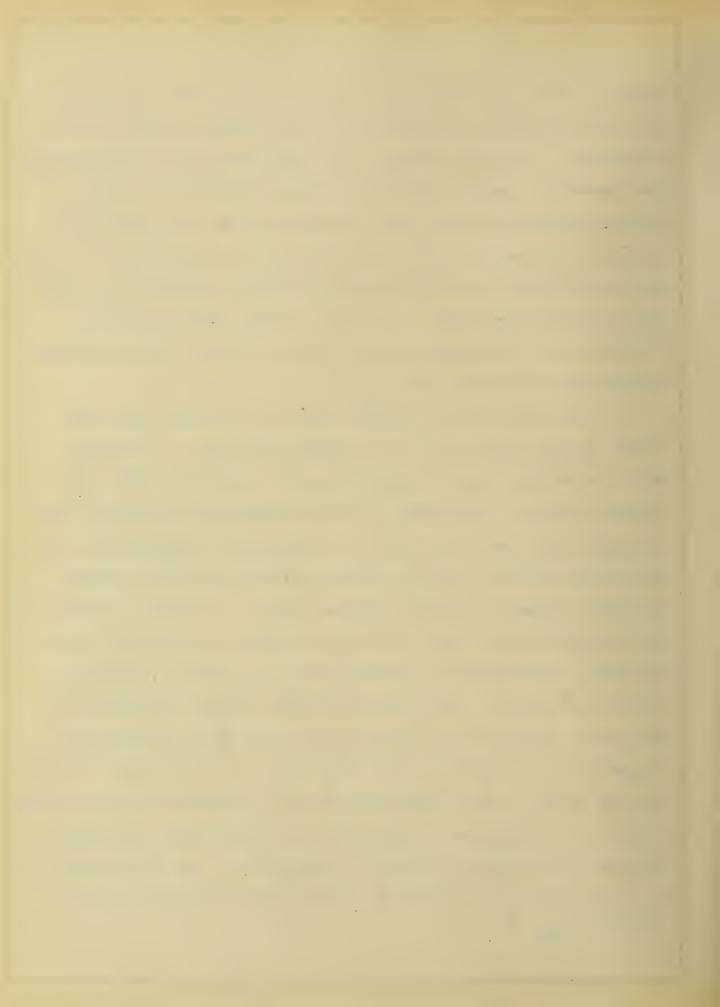
¹⁾ The petition was made under the law of 1841, and bears the date of Feb. 10, 1842. The schedule of debts amounts to \$52,999.42. See Fell's sketch of Gridley in Duis, Good Old Times in McLean County.



months of the long depression went under after brave resistance, when the depression continued until their hoarded resources were exhausted. One after another, they took benefit of the Bankruptcy Law passed by a special session of Congres called by Harrison.

Land depreciated in value until the best tracts were sold for a song, and then were offered vainly to buyers at any price. It was many years before the state recovered from the effects of the hard times that followed 1837. So late as 1848, Robert Fell was offered eighty acres near the farm of his brother, close to Bloomington for three dollars per acre. 1

Not only were individuals ruined by the panic and hard times, but the state of Illinois fared sadly also. The State Bank, as has been noted, suspended specie payment in 1837, and failed in 1842. The state's internal improvement scheme did not collapse until about 1840, when the legislature repealed the law. The construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal had stopped in 1839, and was not resumed for some years. Interest on the state debt was paid until 1841. The state became so seriously involved that many recommended the extreme means of practical repudiation of the state debt. This proposal roused the more thoughtful of the men of Illinois to a strong protest, and no one opposed the suggestion more vigorously than Jesse Fell. He published, in 1845, an open letter to the Senate and House of Illinois, which was widely copies and probably had a considerable influence upon the public opinion of the day with regard to repudiation. He recommended the the imposition of a slight tax, which he said the people would 1) Lewis Life, 27.



gladly pay, and which would recognize the moral obligation of the state. In addition to the primary motive of common honesty, he urged that the passage of such a law would relieve the state of the responsibility for the Illinois and Michigan Canal, which bondholders would then take off the hands of the state.

During these years Fell remained a loyal Whig, working in the party councils when occasion required, but steadily refusing to accept office. In 1850 the Whigs of the neighborhood of Quincy - it will be remembered that this was while he still lived at Payson - urged him to stand for representative. "(Your views) on the really important question of the times - the non-extension of slavery, will not only meet the approval of the entire Whigs of the county, but will I believe tend to secure a strong vote from the free-soilers, who probably in this county and certainly inthe congressional district, hold the balance of power," wrote a Whig leader to him at that time. Fell refused the nomination.

Later, he found in the columns of <u>The Intelligencer</u> a means of influencing public opinion which was practicable even when his private affairs kept him businst. He was untiring in his efforts

¹⁾ Copy of a Letter upon State Repudiation, Jesse W. Fell to the Senate and House of Illinois, 1845.

²⁾ N. Bushnell to Fell, Aug. 23, 1850.

3) For instance, Richard Yates, in a letter dated Nov. 17, 1852, explains his methods of winning the dection of 1852, and than Fell for his defence of him in The Intelligence, and for his

explains his methods of winning the dection of 1852, and thanks Fell for his defence of him in The Intelligencer, and for his help for several years past. The account of the campaign is very interesting. He wrote letters, of which he had 150 copies made, to send to Whigs of influence, both known and unknown to him. After ten days he went through each county in the district "had a little night meeting in each (this is what the Register called my still hunt) and at the end of that time I commenced speaking at the various county seats on a run, and in twenty days the whole Whig columns from center to circumference were moving in solid phalanx and shouting victory all along the line - Calhoun was cowed - his friends alarmed - Judge Douglas and



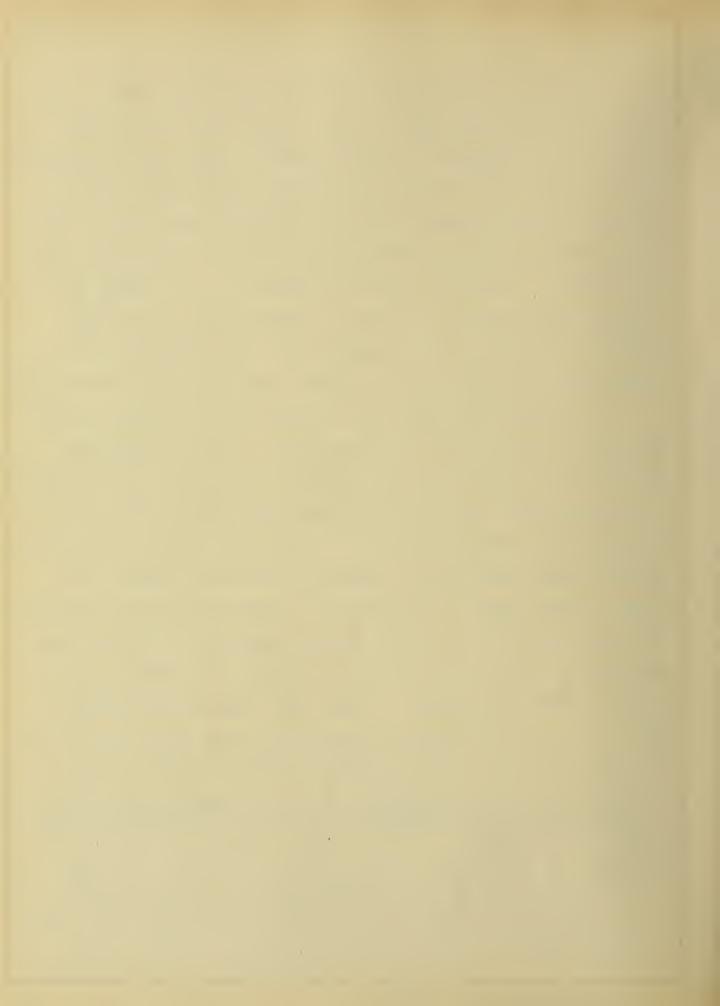
for his friends, and seems in all cases to have given advice which subsequent events justified. Again in 1854 there was a demand that Fell be a candidate for the legislature, and a similar answer. Mr. Fell was wont to remark to his friends, after 1852, that his interest in politics was buried in the grave of Henry Clay. After the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, however, there was no lack of interest. In common with most Friends, the Fell family had long been abolitionists, and when it became clear that the new Republican party was to be organized about the central idea of opposition to the extension of slavery, they united with it eagerly!

The party was organized in Illinois on the twanty-ninth of May, 1856, in Major's Hall in Bloomington. The convention was supposed to be composed of one delegate to each six thousand people, which gave three delegates from McLean County; but others beside delegates participated freely in its business, especially as there seems to have been practical unanimity concerning what was to be done. People came in crowds from all parts of the state, and there was great enthusiasm. John M. Palmer presided. The nominations for the state ticket were made by acclamation, William H. Bissell being selected for governor. There were many notable speeches, but all others were thrown into obscurity by the famous Last Speech of Abraham Lincoln. Fell, although neither an officer nor a

Shields and Gress and Harris, etc. were brought to the rescue - lying handbills and malignant falsehoods were brought in requisition, but in vain - I went to bed the night of election conscious of victory."

¹⁾ Jesse Fell to his son, Jesse W. Fell, June 16,1832. In this letter Fell's father tells of his mother's activity and interest in meetings held to express sympathy for the colored people.

Mrs. Fell was an admirer of Mrs. Mott, and cooperated with her in her efforts. E. M. Prince states that the senior Fell operated a station of the underground railroad. "Hester Vernon (Brown) Fell," in Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois History of

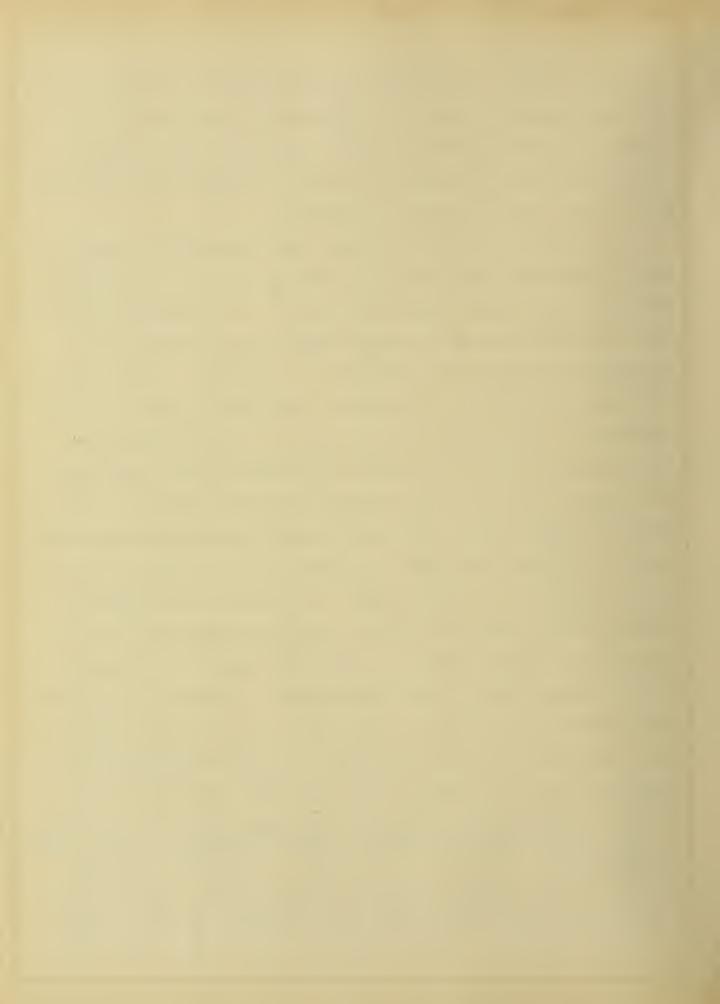


delegate, is said to have made a speech during the proceedings; but no record remains of it. His characteristic activity at such times, it may be remarked in passing, was rather the framing of resolutions and the urging of progressive measures privately among his friends, than the making of speeches.

By 1856, Illinois people had come thoroughly to realize that the Whig party was gone; the question was as to the character and policy that the new party would take. In no state in which it had a following, perhaps, was the Republican party made up of elements more diverse than composed it in Illinois. Congressional district, for instance, comprised in 1856 thirteen counties. The southern counties in the district abominated abolitionists, being still largely influenced by their sourthern antecedents. The northern counties were settled mainly by New England and Ohio people, who brought with them decided anti-slavery views. Fifty-five delegates, representing the thirteen counties, met in convention on July 2, 1856. Owen Lovejoy was nominated, although McLean County and all the southern counties had been instructed for Leonard Swett. Lovejoy was known to be an abolitionist, an ex-member of the Liberty party. Moreover, the southern counties had long yielded the nomination to the northern counties, and thought that a sense of fairness should have granted them the nomination when they urged so able a candidate as Leonard Swett.

¹⁾ Major's Hall was the third story, now demolished, of a building still standing on Front street. Pantagraph, May 28, June 4, 1856. Joseph Medill, "Lincoln's Lost Speech," in McClure's Magazine, Sept. 1896.

²⁾ Kendall, Will, Grundy, La Salle, Bureau, Putnam, Kankakee, Iroquois, McLean, DeWitt, Champaign and Vermillion. The present Ford County was at that time part of Vermillion County, and was afterward known as "the lost nation of Vermillion." Lewis Life.



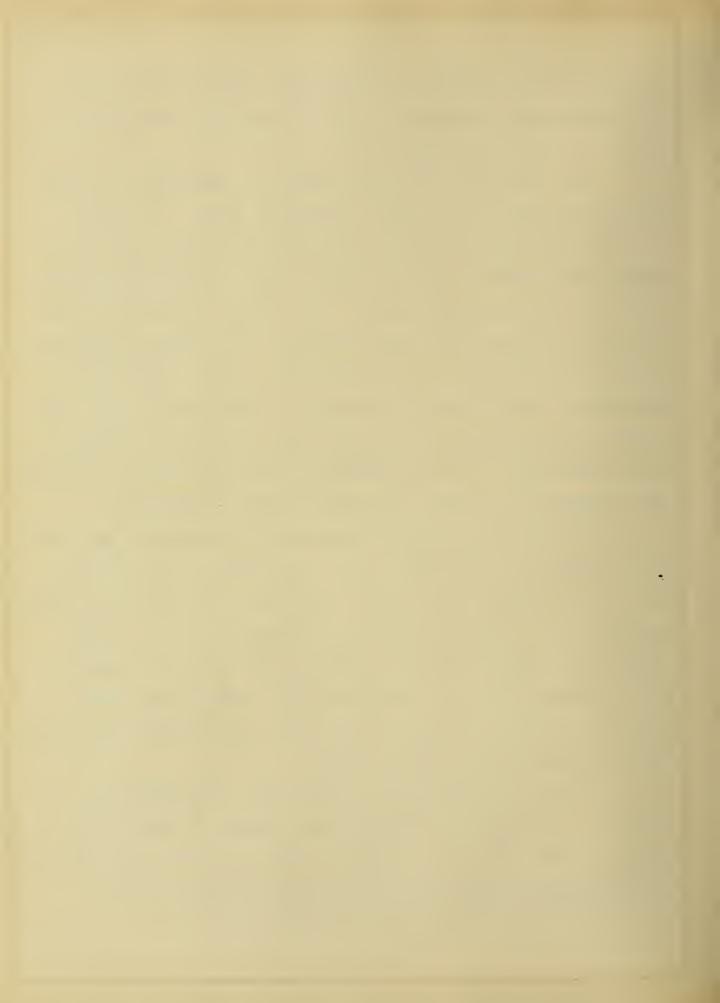
Because of these things, the disgruntled counties held another convention on the sixteenth of July at Bloomington, and nominated Judge T. L. Dickey of Ottawa.

Fell had been in the East during the convention at Ottawa, but he was known to be strongly in favor of Swett. He had gone on private business, but hoping to attend the latter part of the Republican convention at Philadelphia, a hope which was frustrated by delay in his business affairs. He returned, however, in time to attend the great ratification meeting in the square at Bloomingtion, onthe evening of the convention day. After the "bolters" had spoken, some one called on Lovejoy, who had appeared upon the scene. He gave a speech so powerful that he won the unfriendly crowd completely. It was a wonderful victory for Lovejoy, and for the principles of freedom and equality which he advocated.²

On the second evening after, another mass meeting was held on the square, at which Fell offered resolutions in favor of Lovejoy. The crowd was again carried away with enthusiasm, and readily adopted them. Lovejoy sentiment grew from day to day. Judge Dickey later withdrew from the contest, and Lovejoy was elected by a large majority. It was during this campaign that there sprung up the warm friendship between Fell and Lovejoy, which lasted until the death of the latter in 1864.

During the campaign that followed Mr. Fell made many speeches. The Republican organization in Illinois was rapidly completed, and the parted pushed its campaign so energetically that

¹⁾ Pantagraph, June 11, July 2, 9, 23, 1856; April 11, 1868.
2) Brush, The Political Career of Owen Lovejoy. (MSS.)



it won the governorship in the state, although the Democrates were successful in the general elections. During the summer the Bloomington Republican and Democratic clubs exchanged speakers, Mr. Fell being invited to represent his party before the Democratic Club. He was active in the county nominating convention in September. Throughout the summer, however, he seems studiously to have confined himself to local activities.

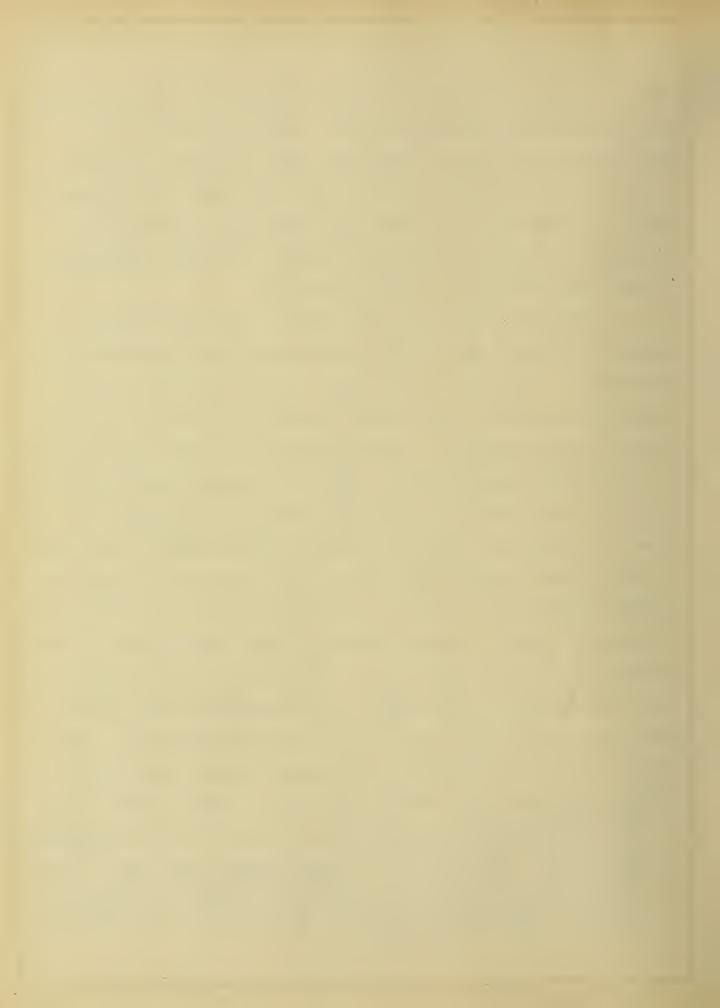
Among the forces that were powerful in shaping public opinion in Illinois after 1853, were the Kansas Aid Committee and its allies. General W. F. M. Arny, a West Virginian who lived in North Bloomington, was a leading spirit in the work of helping northern men in Kansas. 2 The big barn on his place was a depot of supplies for Kansas families, sent in by sympathizers from far and near. The town was a recruiting station for immigrants to Kansas. The Fells, being anti-slavery people, helped in the work. In 1856, at the national convention of the society held in Buffalo, Abraham Lincoln was appointed on the National Kansas Aid Committee. He declined to serve, however, alleging other pressing duties, and recommended Fell as a substitute. General Arny wrote at once to Fell offering him the membership, as representative for Illinois, and asking him to attend the meeting in Chicago on July 30. Fell in turn declined, recommending Arny himself for the post; and in

2) Wm. M. McCambridge, "My Remembrances of Jesse W. Fell," Pantagraph

June 25, July 2, 23, 1856.

¹⁾ Adlai Stevenson, Sr., "My Recollections of Jesse W. Fell" in the Fell Memorial, 49-50.

³⁾ Arny to Fell, July 22, 1856. Chicago Tribune, same date. The Pantagraph of July 23, 1856, says that "A. Lincoln is a member of the national committee." This was of course a mistake. The facts were related by Fell himself in letter to some newspaper; October 3, 1881. Scrap Book.



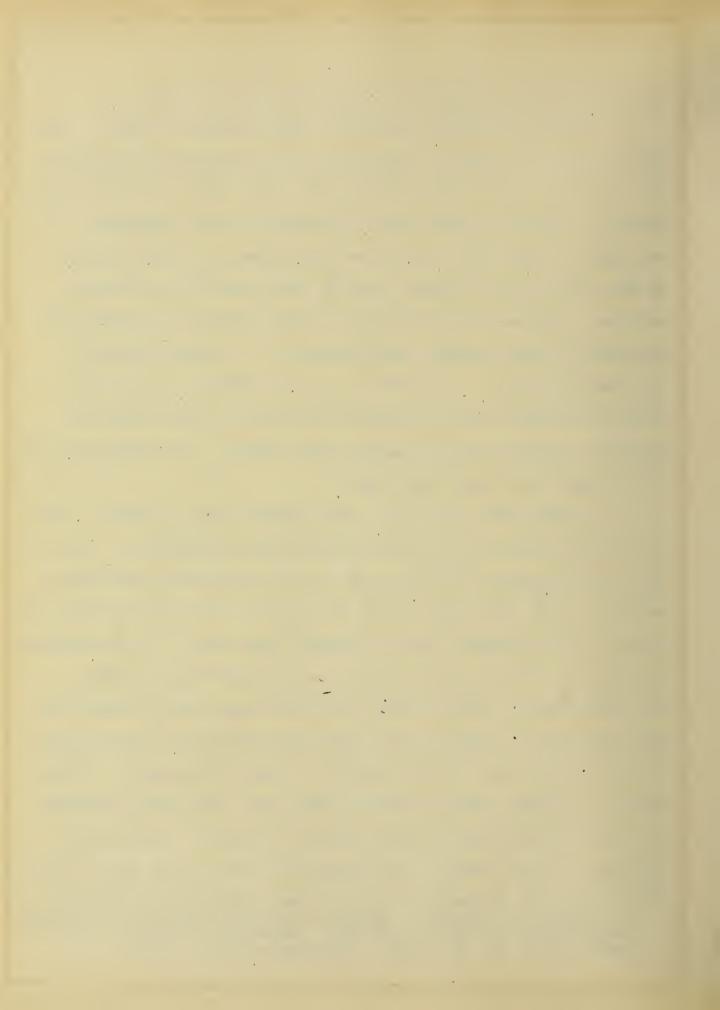
due time he was appointed, serving with marked ability.

After 1856 Fell's concern in politics did not flag. His map of Illinois, with the senatorial districts carefully inked in, and the party vote of each district for 1858, written in the margin, shows how closely he kept track of conditions and tendencies. He was close to the people, and knew their ideas and their heroes. He was close to the leaders, knowing their ambitions and their motives. He was interested in all public affairs, concerned with the growth of the country, solicitous for the right solution of national problems. In 1857 he was commissioned by the State Central Committee as corresponding secretary to visit different parts of Illinois for conferences with leaders. He knew the pulse of the state as no one else could.

As has been noted, Fell met Lincoln first in 1834-5, when
Lincoln and Stuart were serving in the state legislature. At circuit court sessions they were more or less constantly associated
while Mr. Fell continued to ride the circuit, and after he had given
up law for real estate their friendship continued. In the campaigne
of 1840 and 1844 both were active and friendly Whig partisans.

They called each other by their Christian names, and it was noted
with amusement by their common acquaintance that Fell never called
Lincoln "Abe" after the easy fashion of most Illinoisans. It was
one of the Quaker characteristics which gave him a gentle dignity
all men respected, that he never used a nickname. Lincoln was
often at the Fell home in Bloomington, and the two men seem to have

¹⁾ Owen Lovejoy, selecting a man to whom public documents should be intrusted, for deposit in schools and public libraries, directed the national authorities to Fell. Department of the Interior to Owen Lovejoy, May 25, 1858. Lovejoy to Fell, undated.



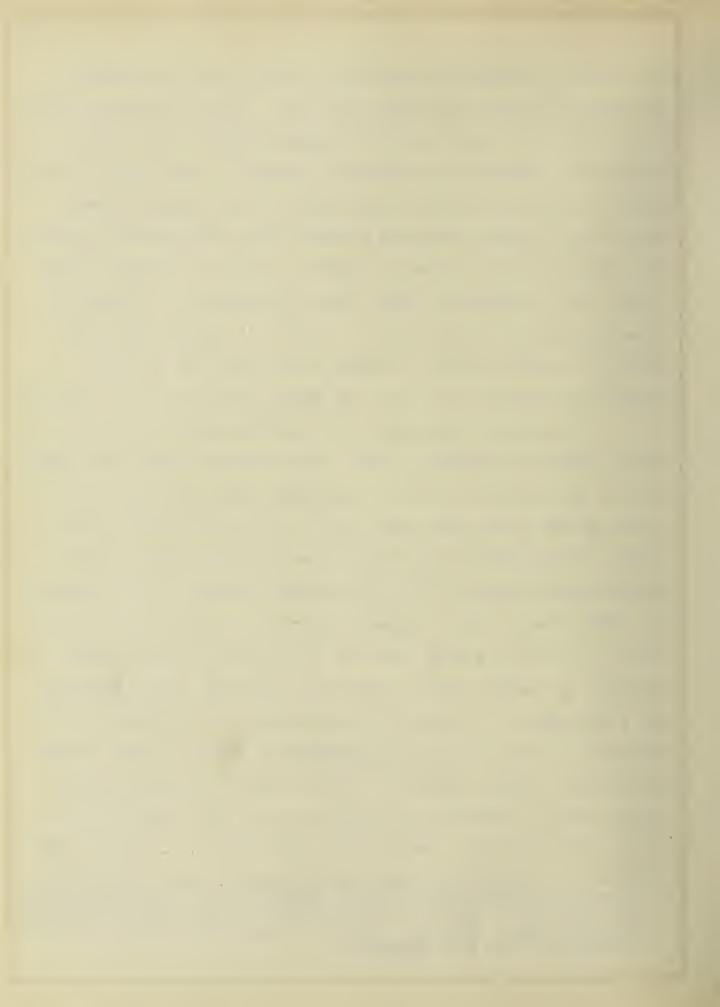
carried on a friendly correspondence whenever there was public business upon which they might cooperate. John F. Eberhart states that Jesse W. Fell and his brother Kersey were the first men to suggest Mr. Lincoln as a presidential timber. Be this as it may, there is little question that the idea of joint debates between Lincoln and Douglas originated with him, and was repeatedly suggested until the debates became a reality. They were first proposed by Mr. Fell in September, 1854, upon the occasion of a speech by Senator Douglas, in Bloomington. Mr. Fell's request was then based on a general desire of people to hear the two together.

Douglas declined to debate, and the matter was dropped for the time.

There was no doubt among the Republicans of Illinois as to their choice for senator in 1858. They wished to make the nomination at the state convention, a proceeding until then unheard-of. In the McLean County convention, held in June, Fell offered resolutions "that Lincoln is our first, last and only choice for the vacancy soon to occur in the United States senate; and that despite all influences at home or abroad, domestic or foreign, the Republicans of Illinois, as with the voice of one man, are unalterably so resolved; to the end, that we may have a big man, with a big mind, and a big heart, to represent our big state. The comment in the Democratic organ, the Illinois Statesman of June 16, 1858, besides furnishing a typical example of the attitude of non-Republicans toward Lincoln, refers to a "secret caucus" of the night before.

¹⁾ Fell Memorial, 26. See also the article by J. R. Rowell, <u>ibid</u>., 15.

²⁾ Stevenson, Something of Men I Have Known, 8. Lawrence Weldon, "New Lincoln Stories" in Chicago Tribune, Feb. 9, and Pantagraph, Feb. 10, 1902. Fell's own account of it is in Oldroyd's Lincoln Memorial Album, 468-472. James T. Ewing tells it in his contribution to the Fell Memorial.

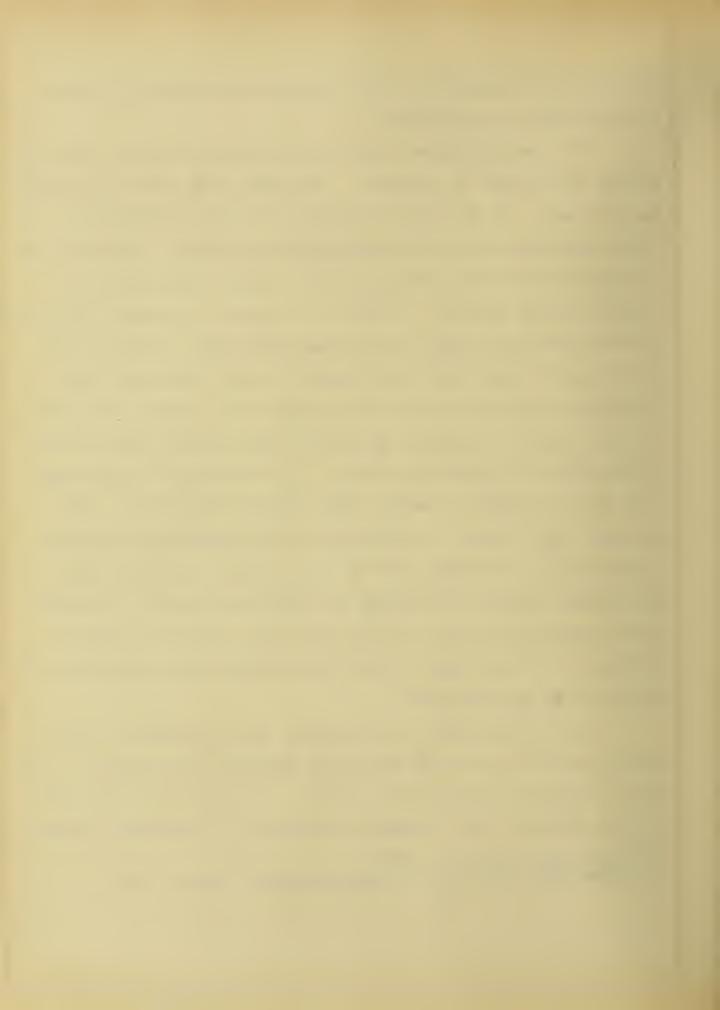


Probably the presentation of the resolution was carefully planned by the leaders of the meeting.

The resolutions were read amid shouts of approval, and were adopted with rounds of applause. Throughout the state the feeling was the same. At the state convention, held in Springfield on the 16th, practically the same resolutions were adopted. It was at the evening session of this convention that Lincoln delivered his "House Divided" speech. To trace the course of speeches and replied that followed, as Lincoln and Doublas pushed their rivalry, would be to repeat a story that has already been well and fully told. Of special interest here is the journey of Fell through the states north and east of Illinois, during the time when the debates were taking place in Illinois and later. He visited all the New England states but Maine, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana. Everywhere he found Republicans who were interested in the debates, and who were eager to hear about the man who was successfully defying and answering Stephen A. Douglas. As he sounded the praises of his friend, the conviction grew in him that in a still larger field Lincoln might become the successful rival of the great Douglas.2

When he returned to Bloomington, Fell proposed to Lincoln that he should be the next Republican candidate for president. This was in his brother Kersey's law office. The story of that conversation, which Mr. Fell afterward substantially reproduced, is well

¹⁾ Pantagraph, June 1, 7, 1858.
2) Lewis Life, 64; Oldroyd, Lincoln Memorial Album, 472-8.

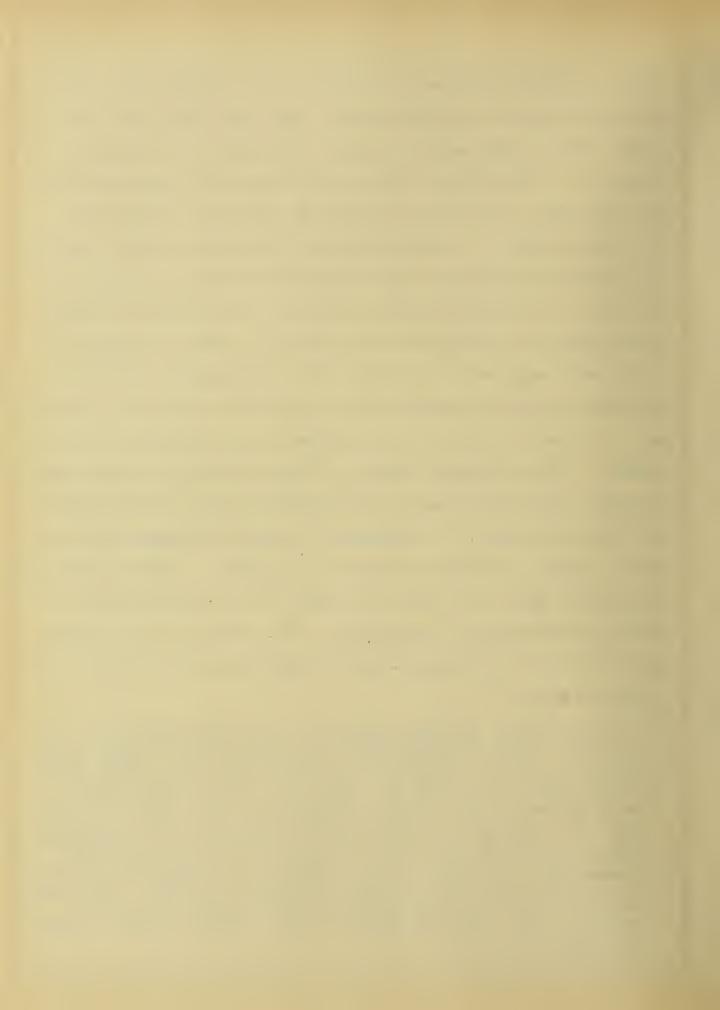


known. Lincoln professed to think it a very foolish idea, and declined to write the autobiographic sketch for which his friend asked, that he might acquaint people in the East with Lincoln's history. 1 Nevertheless Fell quietly pursued the realization of his "big idea," which other foresighted Republicans shared with him, through 1859. He was secretary of the state central committee, in which capacity he kept a sensitive finger on the pulse of the state. He found occasion, moreover, in perfecting the state organization, to visit most of the counties, where the people as a rule were eager to see "Abe" Lincoln a presidential candidate. There was no need, apparently, to urge Lincoln's name to Illinois-It was in other states that the Lincoln propaganda must be pushed. Lincoln himself began to think seriously of running for president during this summer, and especially after visiting Kansas and Ohio in the fall. On December 20, when Fell repeated his request, Lincoln gave him the famous autobiography. Without waiting to copy the paper, Fell sent it at once to his friend, Joseph J. Lewis, in Westchester, Pennsylvania. Mr. Lewis' use of it forms one of the most interesting chapters in the story of Lincoln's rise to the presidency. 2

¹⁾ Oldroyd, Lincoln Memorial Album, 477 (Fell's own account); also in Arnold, Life of Lincoln, 155; Tarbell, Life of Lincoln, II, 128-130. Whitney, Lincoln the President, I, 315. Hill, Lin-*

²⁾ Arnold, Life of Lincoln, 14; Joseph L. Lewis to Fell, March 28, 1872; Lewis to J. R. Osgood, same date. This autobiography, with the letter from Lincoln accompanied it, was later the subject of a prolonged controversy between Mr. Fell and his family and O. H. Oldroyd, who made a noted collection of Lincolniana. The manuscript was returned by Lewis to Fell, and was later loaned, with the letter, to Mr. Oldroyd. Mr. Oldroyd returned the autobiography, but has never returned the letter. Memoranda among the Fell MSS., and letters from O. H. Oldroyd to Fell, April 3, 1882; Shelby M. Cullom to Hon. Lawrence Weldon, August 30, 1887.

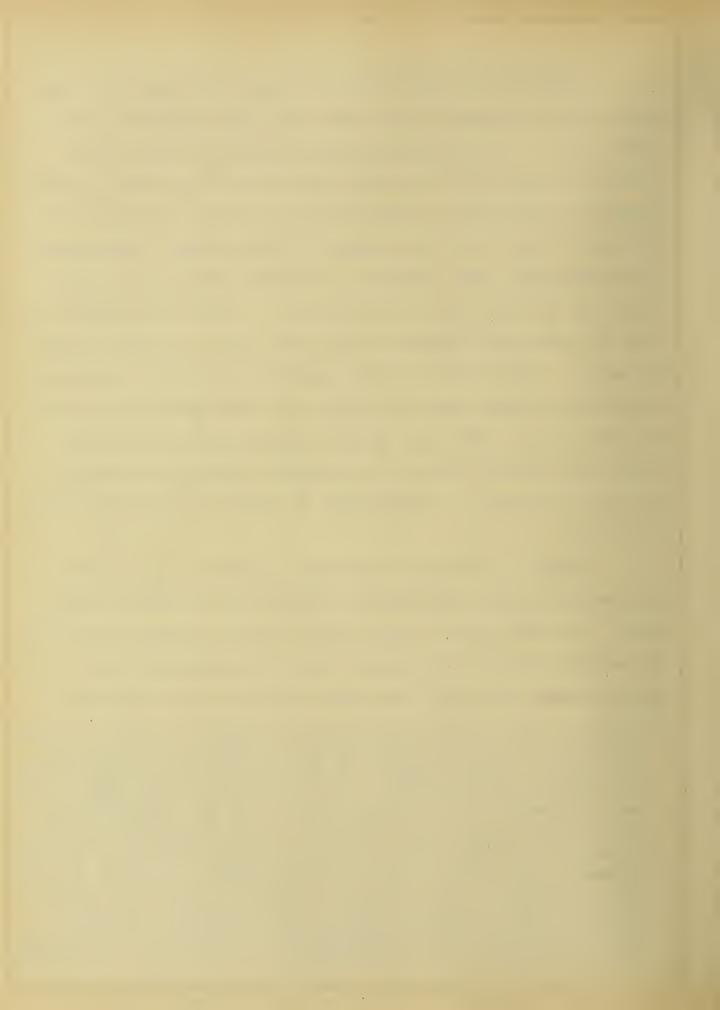
*coln the Lawyer, 280.



During all the years since leaving Pennsylvania, Fell had never suffered himself to lose touch with public affairs in his native state. Through correspondence and through many return visits, even after all his family had removed to Illinois, he kept himself well informed of tendencies and opinions in Pennsylvania. He knew that that state had already, in 1859, become a stronghold of the new party, with opposition to slavery extension and high tariff for the backbone of its platform. He knew that Seward, who held the unswering allegiance of New York, was not popular in Pennsylvania. He knew that Lincoln, popular in the West, needed the support of the East also if he were to win from Seward the Republican nomination in 1860; and that the influence of Pennsylvania, direct and indirect, would be an important factor in the coming national convention. Pennsylvania, if won for Lincoln, must know about him.

Joseph L. Lewis was a prominent Republican who wielded a persuasive pen, and was personally influential in eastern Pennsylvania. He took care to inform himself rather minutely concerning the westerner before he prepared, from the autobiography and from other material which Fell furnished, an article which introduced

¹⁾ Issacher Price to Fell, Downington, Pa., Sept. 24, 1838. In this letter, one of the most interesting in the Fell collection, Mr. Price gives a rather pessimistic view of political conditions in Van Buren's administration. "Ritner cannot be elected he is the most prevaricating shuffling tool that ever set on a throne," he says; "promise one thing today and go right the contrary tomorrow this he has done in 20 instances to my own knowledge & his great drill Sargeant Thad Stevens is the most barefaced impudent scoundrel now unchained and running at large in the state." This estimate, from which doubtless Fell deduced his own more charitable conclusions, is followed by a prophecy of the vote in the coming election. Speaking of national politics, this Pennsylvania village postmaster predicts: "Abolition will entirely swallow up antiism in fact anti-masonry is defunct - abolitionism takes its place & the party that adopts it as a test is destined



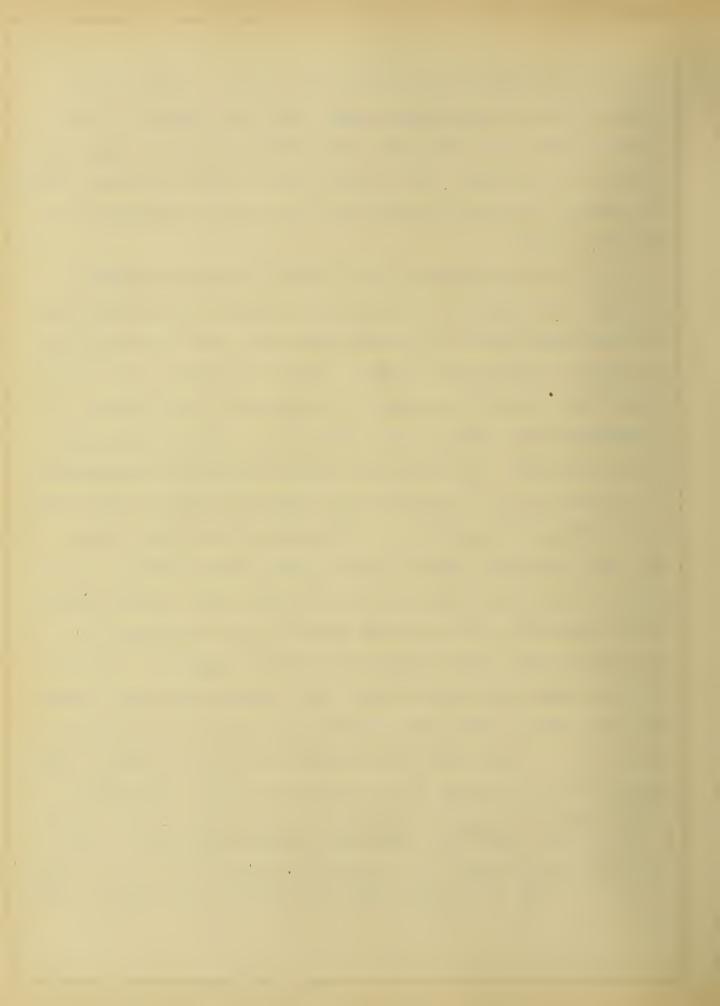
Lincoln to the people of his part of the state. This article appeared first in the Chester County Times of February 11, 1860.

It was widely copies throughout the state and beyond it, and together with the personal work and speeches of Lewis and others, served to acquaint the Pennsylvanians with the career and character of Abraham Lincoln. 1

It is interesting to note how the two men who planned Lincoln's introduction to Pennsylvania selected from the material at hand those elements which they knew would count for most with the people with whom they dealt. He was "certainly not of the first families" said Mr. Lewis. His ancestors were Friends - a circumstance with which, it is safe to say, very few Illinoisans were acquainted. They had gone from Berks County, Pennsylvania, to Virginia; but in Illinois on one traced the Lincoln family back of its Virginia antecedents. Descendents of the same stock, Mr. Lewis continued, still lived in eastern Pennsylvania. been a strong Whig leader, a friend of Henry Clay, a great worker in the campaign of 1844, and was master of the "principles of political economy which underlie the tariff" question. Pennsylvania was especially assured that: "Mr. Lincoln has been a consistent and earnest tariff man from the first hour of his entering public life. He is such from principle, and from a deeply rooted conviction of the widsom of the protective policy; and whatever

to growl in a glorious minority for many a year to come & this will be the end of the great and talented Whig party in the U States."

¹⁾ J. J. Lewis to Fell, Jan. 30, 1860; Vickers Fell to E. J. Lewis, June 3, 1896; Daily Local News (West Chester, Pa.) Apr. 9, 1883.



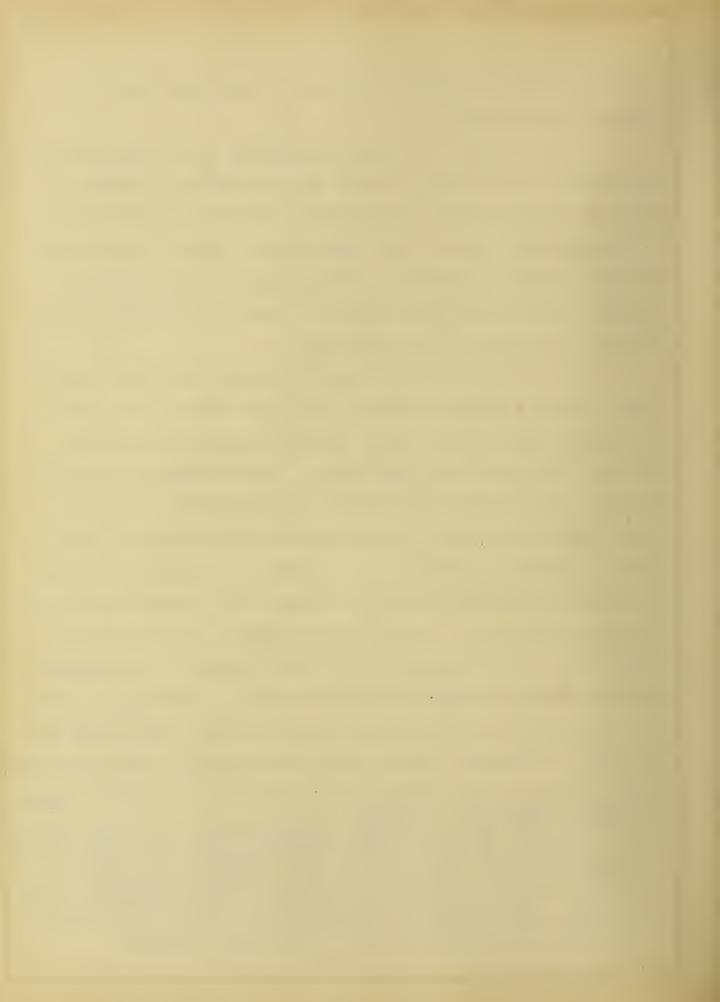
influence he may hereafter exert upon the government will be in favor of that policy. 1

Lewis' account of Lincoln's sacrifice of his own chances of election to the Senate in 1854, when he asked his friends to vote for Trumbull rather than risk the election of Governor Matteson, a Nebraska Democrat, must have had its intended effect with the anti-slavery Republicans of Pennsylvania. He attributed Douglas' success after the debates of 1858 to an "old and grossly unequal apportionment of the districts."

As the time for the National Republican Convention drew near, Lincoln's friends realized that, aside from one of those unexpected tricks of fate which sometimes happen at political meetings, his chief rival was Seward. Chase, Cameron, and Bates had only local support, and were not greatly feared. Leonard Scott, David Davis, and Jesse Fell were the three men most active intheir efforts for Lincoln. Fell had declined again to be secretary of the Republican state committee, that he might have more time for field work. In the spring of 1860 he had endeavored to secure full lists of names from the entire state for the documents sent out by the national Republican committee. Nothing that could aid in preparing Illinois to play her part in the coming drama was omitted. Financial support was assured through a well-organized

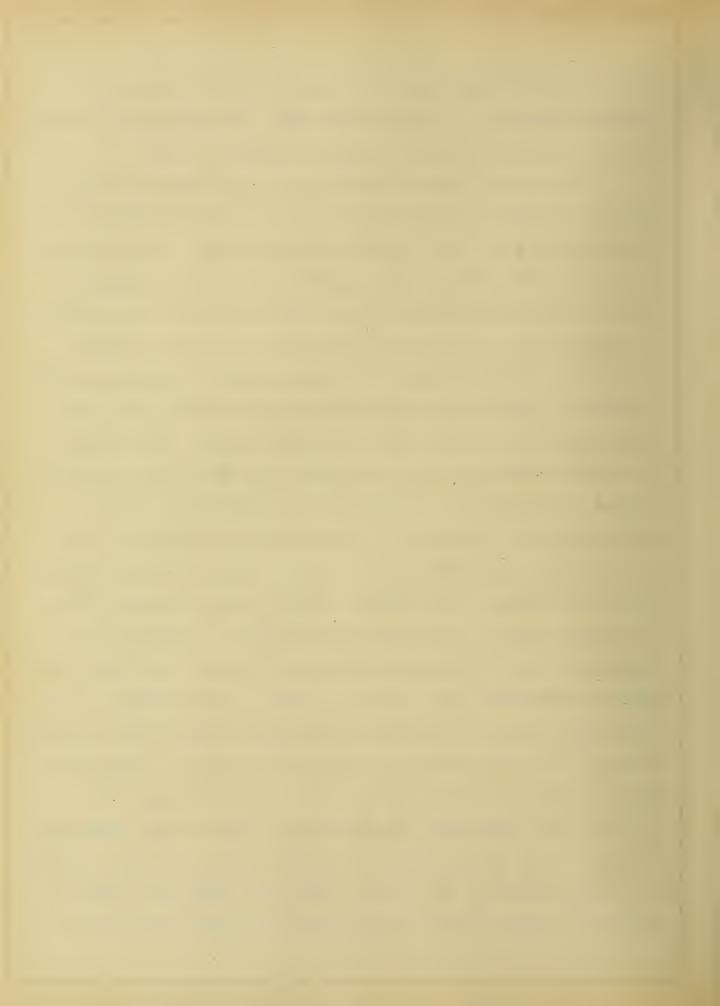
¹⁾ For comment on the importance of this matter, see Blaine, <u>Twenty</u> <u>Years in Congress</u>, I, 196-207.

²⁾ Fell, in Duis, Good Old Times in McLean County. Circular letter of the Republican state central committee, June 23, 1860, issued by the secretary, Horace White, who succeeded Fell; circular letter from Fell to chairman of county central committees, May 8, 1860; circular on finances to guarantee county assessments, June 9, 1859. Both of these latter circulars show the methodical business administration by which Fell secured an unusual degree of unity and assured resources for the great campaign.



system of county assessments, collected in 1859 to be ready for campaign purposes. It was planned that a great delegation should go from central Illinois to Chicago to support Lincoln.

The account of the convention has been told many times. There is a story of the events of the meeting which because of its connection with Mr. Fell should be repeated here. It is unsupported by any sort of documentary evidence, but persists among the older citizens of Bloomington to an extent which at least warrants its repetition. It is to be effect that the Illinois leaders discovered that the tickets of admission issued to delegates and visitors to the convention were almost monopolized by the large delegations from the East which supported Seward. The Lincoln contingent, having gathered with great enthusiasm, were suddenly reduced to the depths of despair by the announcement, on the morning of May 18, that all the tickets had been given out, and that they would therefore have to content themselves with standing outside the Wigwam. The western leaders gathered quickly for a conference, because the popular enthusiasm for Lincoln of the delegations from Illinois and Indiana was an asset upon which they definitely counted in the session to come. Fell promised a solution, and made good his promise by producing another set of tickets, similar to the first, which he had hastily printed. These were fairly distributed to the leaders of the various delegations, including the Seward men; who distributed them to their adherents. During the morning the Seward men, feeling secure of their seats in the Wigwam because of the tickets they held, organized a monster parade for Seward, led by the band which had come from New York.



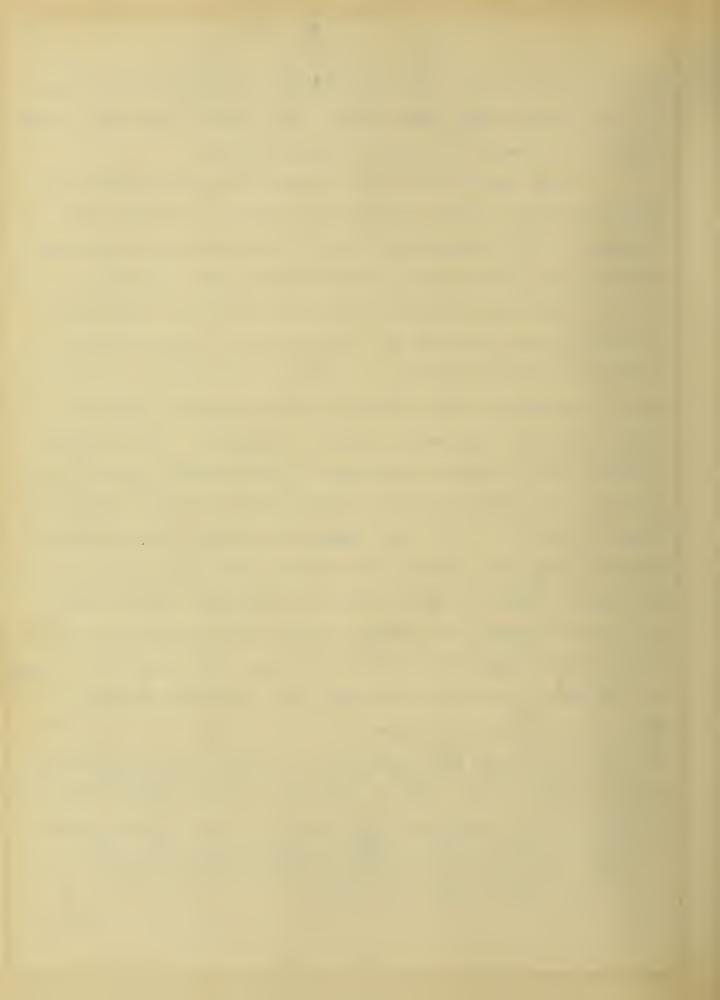
Returning to the hall, they found the western men already admitted in large numbers, and ready to shout for Lincoln; while other crowds filled the streets for blocks in every direction.

Joseph Lewis, with other delegates from Pennsylvania, did valiant work for Lincoln, and nominated Lewis' old friend, John Hickman, for vice-presidential aid. The Pennsylvania contingent, returning full of enthusiasm, pushed the campaign vigorously. a view to increasing Lincoln's chances by making the people more intimately acquainted with him, Lewis tried to secure Davis and Swett as campaign speakers for his state, but failed to convince the general committee of the advisability of this plan. Davis and Swett, of course, were well occupied in Illinois. Owen Lovejoy, candidate for the House, conducted a lively campaign, guided in his methods by the advice of Fell, who had become his close friend and hearty supporter. Fell's own campaign notebook, filled withnewspaper clippings and notes for comment and reply, has been preserved, and shows a collection of indictments of slavery, southern commendations of Buchanan (with caustic comment very belligerent for a Quaker) and clippings about "Bully" Brooks. The summer and autumn was for him, as for many Illinoisans, one long effort to make Lincoln the head of the nation.3

1860.

¹⁾ Henry Fell in the Fell Memorial, 12. Horace White considers the story improbable. Horace White to the writer, April 30, 1914.
2) J. J. Lewis to Fell, May 28, 1860; Gen. Stokely to Fell, Dec. 21,

³⁾ Concerning the campaign in Pennsylvania; Lewis to Fell, May 28, June 17, July 9, Sept. 1, Sept. 25, Oct. 1, Oct. 21, 1860; John G. Nicolay to Fell, July 19, 1860; Lincoln to Fell, Oct. 5, 1860. Concerning Owen Lovejoy; Lovejoy to Fell, May 28, June 27, July 21, Sept. 11, 1860.

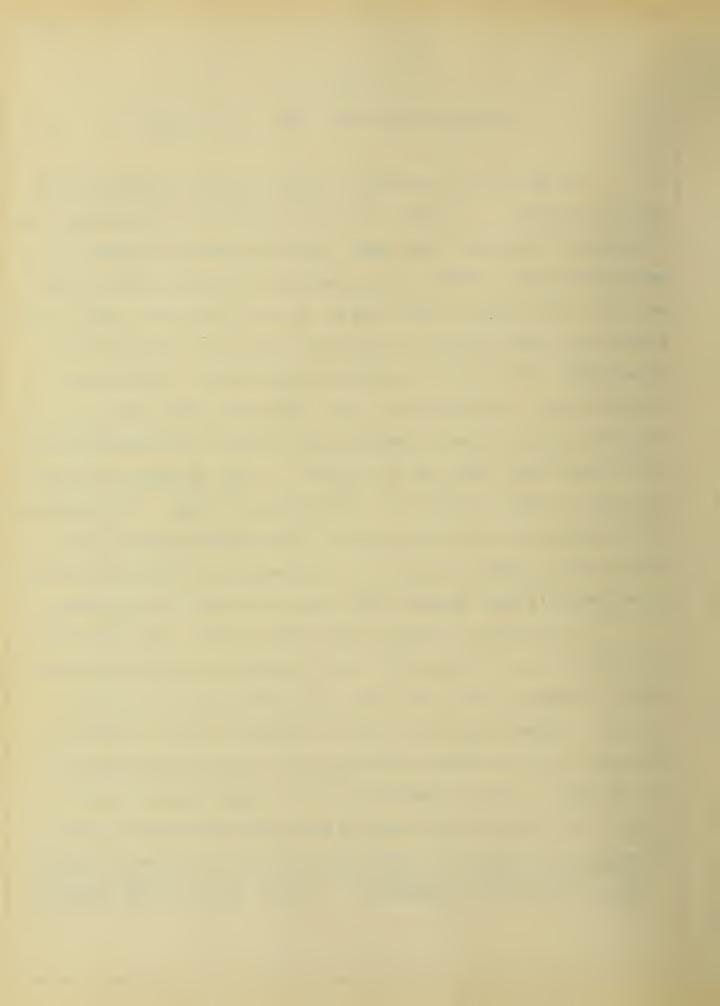


The Years of the Civil War. (1860-1865).

Following the election of Lincoln came an inevitable siege of office-seekers. Joseph J. Lewis was actively corresponding with Lincoln and Fell during this time, not only because he hoped to receive some sort of reward for his services in Pennsylvania for himself, but also because a man whom he cordially disliked, and of whose loyalty to Lincoln during his campaign he had the strongest doubts, seemed destined to receive a cabinet appointment. This man was Simon Cameron. Instigated by Lewis' representations concerning the character and abilities of Cameron, Fell visited the president-elect and told him what Lewis had written him. Lyman Trumbull and others, also told Lincoln of Cameron's reputation and record. The president-elect seems to have given up the idea of appointing him to the portfolio of war by early January, but afterward again altered his plans, since Cameron's name appeared with the other appointments in March.1

In the case of Norman B. Judd, who had made the nomination of Lincoln for the Illinoisans, Lincoln was more effectively counseled. No paper left by Mr. Fell illustrates better his sound political judgment than the letter of January 2, 1861, in which he discusses with Lincoln the possibility of a cabinet appointment for Judd or Davis. After speaking of his own high regard for Judd, he said that in the state there was much much bitterness toward him,

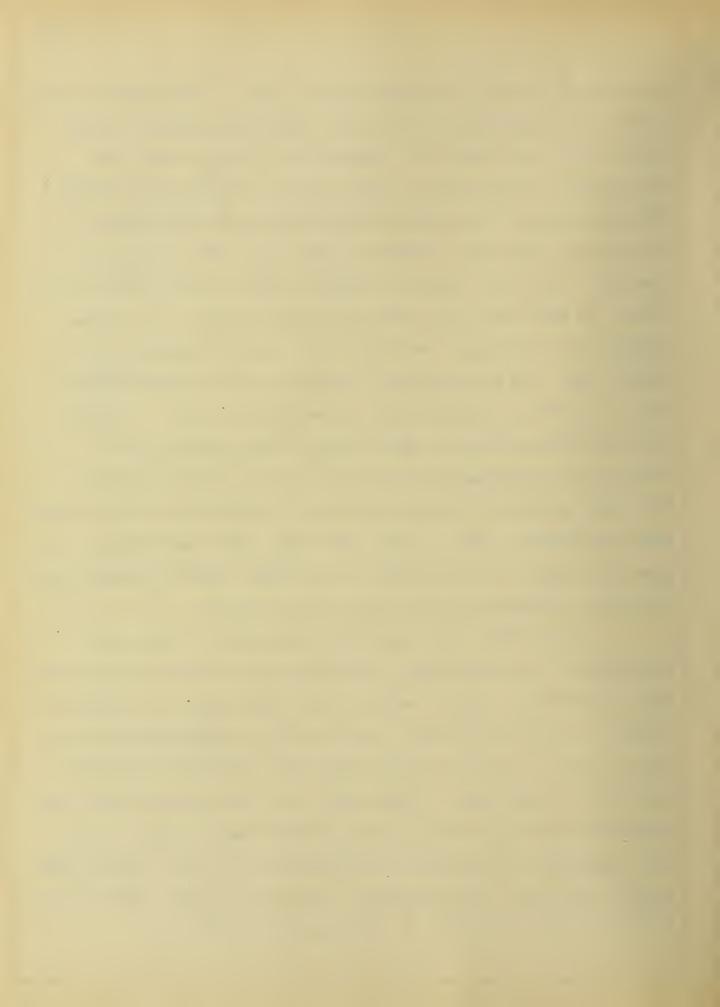
¹⁾ Lewis to Fell, Dec. 17, 1860, Jan. 15, 1861. In view of Cameron's subsequent record as secretary of war, it is interesting to note Lewis' unqualified condemnation. White, Life of Lyman Trumbull, 142-152.



particularly in the Whig element of the party. The causes of this included his opposition to Lincoln in his first contest for the senatorship, which was still remembered in a way to make his appointment "a bitter pill to many of your old and tried friends." The Republicans of Whig antecedents wanted to see David Davis in the cabinet; and of his loyalty and devotion there would be no question. But Fell thought it unwise, since Illinois had the presidency, to make any first-class appointments there. He begged Lincoln not to increase the feud between the two elements of the party, (just then at its height between the two elements of the slavery conflict) by appointing the leader of either. Indiana and Pennsylvania should be given cabinet appointments, but by avoiding any appointment in Illinois friction could be allayed. Davis had agreed with these sentiments in October; nor did Fell add, what was probably patent to him, that Davis might have changed his mind since then. He expressed a strong hope that his friend might be given a "first-rate second class appointment."

Joseph Lewis would gladly have accepted a foreign post.

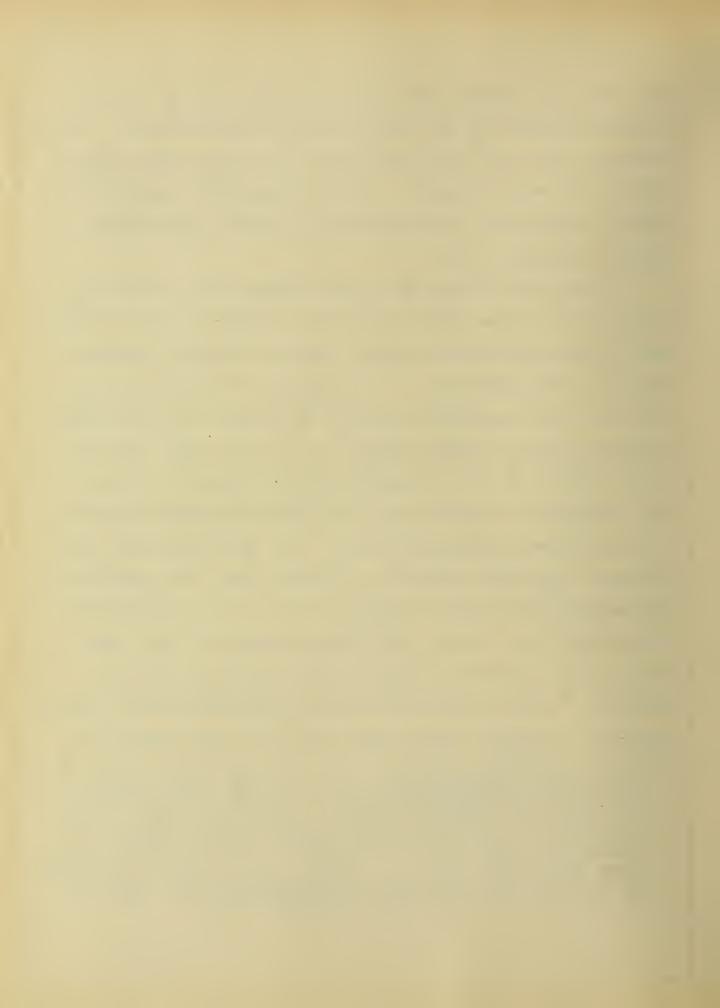
But this was not forthcoming, nor was any other federal appointment until March, 1863, when he was appointed commissioner of internal revenue, a position for which Lincoln had been considering him for about a year. Fell's friends confidently expected to see him appointed to some place of importance, but such an appointment was as distasteful to him then as at any other time during his life. The circumstance of Lincoln's elevation did not alter his own fixed plans, principles, and preferences, which seem to have been to bring 1) Lewis to Fell, March 1, 27, 1862, March 13, 1863.



about what he considered desirable events and results, through personal influence rather than by personal administration. At the outbreak of the war, he was offered a place as assistant quartermaster, with rank of captain. This, with possibly other similar offers, he declined, and continued for a time to carry on his regular business as usual.

When the certainty of the war became clear to everyone, at the fall of Sumter, men who felt the responsibility of leading public opinion bent their energies toward uniting the country in support of the government. The friends of Lincoln in central Illinois wished especially to hold up the hands of the president by assuring him of popular support. On the day after the fall of Fort Sumter, Mr. Fell hurriedly gathered together a group of the leading men of Bloomington, both Republicans and Democrates, in an upper room on Washington street. He had resolutions ready as usual, which were adopted by all but Mr. Snow, who sympathized with secession and had the courage to say so in an overwhelmingly loyal community. Having united among themselves these local leaders next turned their attention to securing popular union sentiment. They had handbills printed and distributed for a massmeeting to be held in Phoenix Hall that very night; and before

¹⁾ Among those who attended were C. P. Merriman and Dr. David Brier, Republicans; Hamilton Spencer, T. P. Rogers, Allen Withers, Dr. E. R. Roe, and H. P. Merriman, Democrats - the last two of the Democratic Statesman; and D. J. Snow of The Times. The speakers at the evening meeting included James S. Ewing, Colonel W. P. Boyd, Dr. T. B. Rogers, Dr. E. R. Roe, Rev. C. P. Ames, Harvey Hogg, and E. M. Prince. The resolutions are given in the Lewis Life, 68, and in the Pantagraph, April 17, 1861. Dr. Roe's account is in the Pantagraph for July 29, 1871.



separating, agreed upon a long program of speakers upon whose sentiments they could rely, that there might be no time for possible dissenting volunteers from the audience. Mr. Spencer presided, and one prominent man after another addressed the audience. The people cheered it enthusiastically, and sang patriotic songs. resolutions were presented by Rev. Ames, who called upon those "who in their hearts swore to the sentiments therein expressed, " to hold up their right hands in voting. "A response like thunder came up from the densely packed audience, and a thousand hands flashed in the light above the sea of heads, like the drawing of myriad swords." This meeting, the first of its kind in Illinois, was followed by many in other towns all over the region.

As the friend of Lincoln, Mr. Fell found himself more in demand as a political power than he had ever been. His old friends found him responsive as formerly; new friends, called to the front by the circumstances of war, found him ready and anxious to help where help was needed. Owen Lovejoy called upon his freely for aid and advice; Governor Yates and Lyman Trumbull asked and received help from him. With Lovejoy, he urged the appointment of Davis to the Supreme Bench. Yates, who met determined and

An undated petition to Lincoln in behalf of Jesse Bishop of

Bloomington, who had suffered at the hands of secession

¹⁾ Owen Lovejoy to Fell, April 1, 1861; Fell to Yates, April 8, June 12, 1861; Lyman Trumbull to Fell, Feb. 1, June 7, 1861; Yates to Fell, Aug. 13, 1864. Among the letters of this period is one from Fell to Governor Yates, dated Aug. 18, 1864. It called Yates' attention to the fact that there is no practical farmer among those appointed to suggest an application of the funds accrueing to Illinois under the Morrill Act, and suggested George W. Minier of Tazewell County, a successful farmer and a forcible writer, as a member of this committee. Letters concerning the appointment of Davis are not now available, but Fell's article in the Pantagraph of April 11, 1868, contains a statement of his agency.



and influential opposition, largely upon personal grounds, especially appreciated his loyal support. Opposition to the governor, at a time when every element in Illinois should have been united in support of the administration, seemed very foolish and wrong to Jesse Fell, and he used his pen and his personal influence to gain better cooperation for the governor.

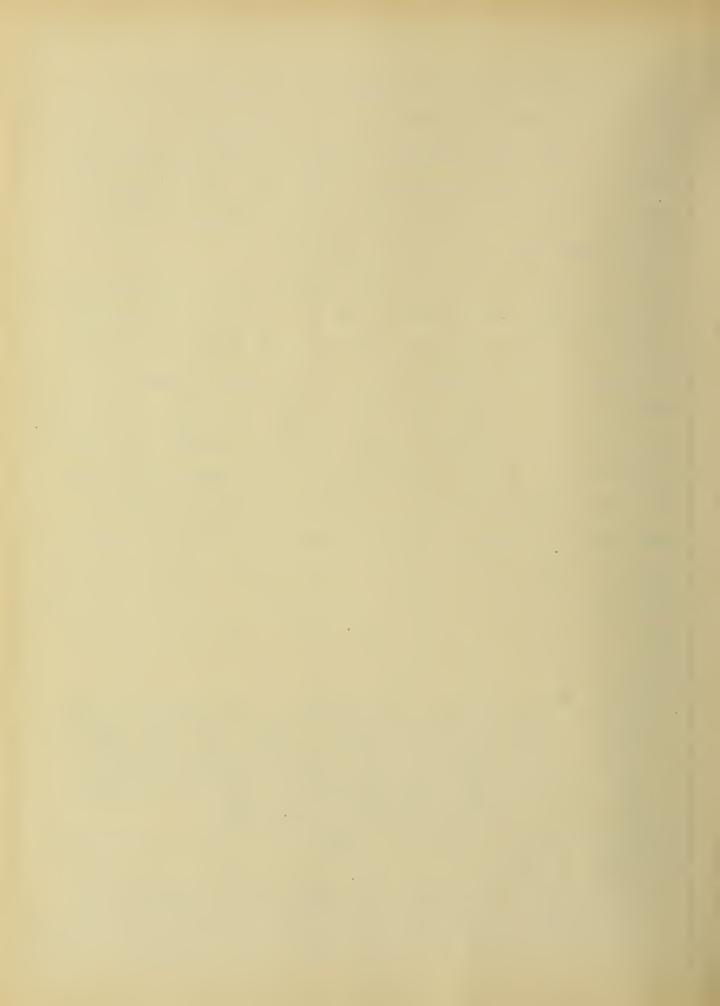
Fell's relations with Owen Lovejoy, whom he admired greatly, were especially close during the war. Lovejoy at Washington and Fell in Illinois and other states of the Middle West, found many ways of helping each other; and they liked to compare notes and opinions. Writing to his friend early in October, 1862, Fell said: "Can it be possible that the Almighty, (who will pardon my presumption) is so poor a general as to suffer this war to come to a close without sweeping, as with the besom of destruction, that damning sin that has thus culminated in civil war. We will trust not - and will pray not; at least till the 'old cuss' shall be 'placed' - as Honest Old Abe expressed it - 'in process of final' and we may justly add "speedy extinction.'" "My trust is in God for the nation," Lovejoy replied. 3

sympathizers, belongs to this period. It is signed by Thomas I. Turner, Jesse W. Fell, Richard Yates, W. Bushnell, Richard Oglesby, S. M. Cullom and others. Kersey Fell seems especially to have interested himself in helping those upon whom the troubles of the war were heavy. A set of letters from him to Governor Yates, dated from September 21, 1861, to December 27, 1864, arefilled with requests for passes, money, or permits to all sorts of folk who need help. Yates MSS.

¹⁾ Richard Yates to Fell, June 7, 1862.

²⁾ Lovejoy to Fell, December 7, 1862; Fell to his brother Vickers, October 7, 1862.

³⁾ Lovejoy selected Fell to prepare such a memoir as might seem suitable, after his death. In April, 1864, therefore, his daughter wrote to Fell asking him to do this last service for his friend. Fell was also among those who raised money for the erection of a monument, and he seems to have secured the payment



Among the friends of Mr. Fell who by no means shared his own Quaker aversion to fighting, was the "Fighting Schoolmaster," Charles E. Hovey, the Normal School president who led the Thirty-third Illinois out of the schoolroom into the field. Without having had technical training in tactics, he proved an able commander. But he was never able to qualify his outspoken New England anti-slavery sentiments, nor did he find any common ground with the West Point men with whom he was associated, and who were able to see the point of view of the southern men. He asked and received Mr. Fell's aid in enterprises for which he needed an agent in civil life, while Mr. Fell was enabled to keep in close touch with field operations from a source which he knew to be trustworthy.1

His own participation in the war, until now delayed by the pressure of private business and a distaste for military life, began in 1862. In late June, 1861, he went to Washington to see

of money owed Lovejoy to his family. Lucy I. Lovejoy to Fell, April 6, 1864; circular letter from Princeton, signed by John H. Bryant, C. C. Mason, and F. Bascom, May 10, 1864; Bryant to Fell, Nov. 18, 1865.

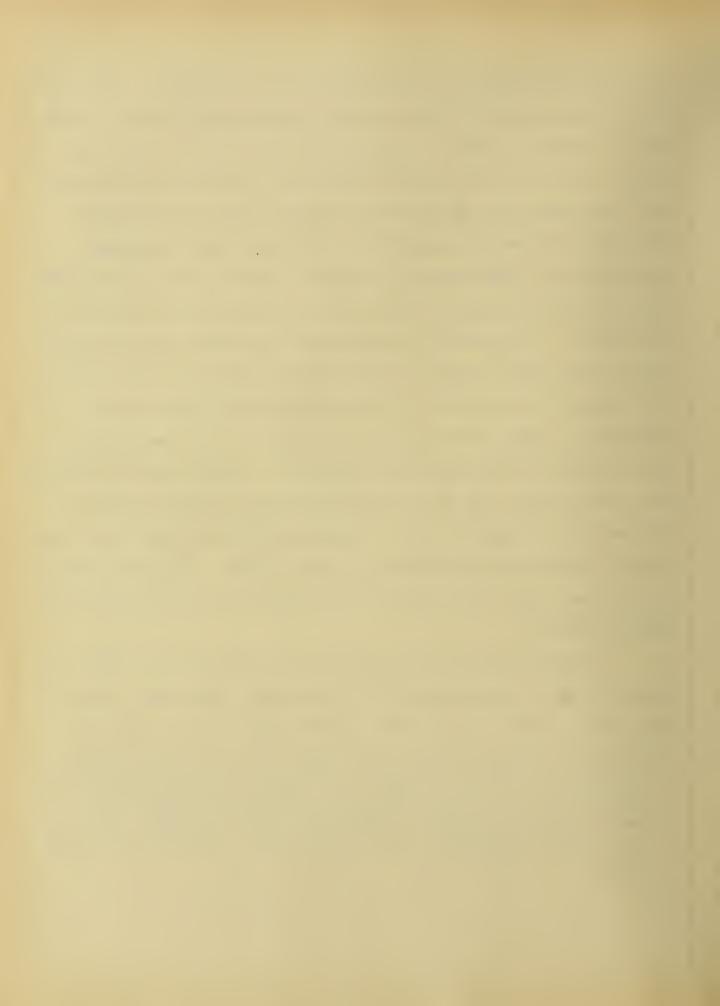
¹⁾ Illinois Statesman, July 18, 1862. The letter from General Hovey to Mr. Fell, dated Arcadia, Missouri, January 21, 1862, shows clearly the irreconcilable differences between a soldier of the volunteers and the West Pointers: "I hate the rule of the heartless, brainless, West Pointers who now hold our lives & honor in their keeping. We are almost maddened at the inexplicable delays and little jealousies of the men - besides, I am sorry to say it, the patriotism of the whole lot is questionable. They are traitorous if not traitors - They lean Southward ... I will tell you what I have not said before that we only failed to take the entire force of Jeff. Thompson at the battle of Fredricktown through the shortsightedness or rascality of the colonel commanding (Carlin, a Regular - a West Pointer) We could just as easily have attacked Thompson in the rear & others have cut off his retreat - but no, we must be led down in front. - be thrust onto their cannon and their chosen position - They must have a chance to retreat and run. So they all slipped through our fingers."



Lincoln and to observe the situation there for himself. With Hovey, who at that time had not yet enlisted, he went out with the crowds which followed the army to the disastrous Bull Run. After the battle, while Hovey surveyed the field and interviewed spectators, Fell found congenial employment in helping about the hospitals which had been hastily improvised. He found there a certain Captain McCook, lying mortally wounded. He was able to help many, and remained with Captain McCook and his father until the death of the former. He returned from Washington impressed with the magnitude of the coming struggle, and the compunction of his own share in it grew as time passed. In the second year of the war he arranged his nursery and real estate business for a long absence, and offered his services to the president. Knowing that his talents were not military, and that he had passed the age when he might be trained into a fighting man, he accepted gladly the position of paymaster, to which the rank of major was attached. The appointment seems to have been a pet project of Lincoln, as his letters on the subject attest.1

He accepted the appointment on the 19th of July, 1862, and began his duties soon afterward at Louisville, Kentucky. He took with him as clerks his son Henry, and William O. Davis, who was

¹⁾ Lincoln to the secretary of war, Dec. 23, 1861, March 29, 1862.
"I really wish Jesse W. Fell, of Illinois, to be appointed a Paymaster in the Regular Army, at farthest, as early as the 1st of July, 1862. I wish nothing to interfere with this; and I have so written as much as two months ago, I think." See also O. H. Browning to Fell, June 26, 30, 1862. Records in the War Department at Washington.



betrothed to his daughter Eliza. As a friend of the president, he was received among his colleagues with unusual interest, which gave place soon, as Rodney Smith bears witness, to deep respect and His habit of going about unarmed - the expression of a fixed principle of trusting men - was remarked uponby his colleagues. So far as records show, he suffered no attack during the entire term of his service. He employed himself first in mastering the intricate red-tape of the service, after which he was sent to Indianapolis to pay the Sixty-ninth Indiana Infantry, in August. From there he went to Springfield, Illinois, which was his headquarters while he paid the Illinois troops then being hurried to the front. Major William Smith, a more experienced paymaster, took Henry Fell into his personal employ, giving Mr. Fell Rodney Smith, an experienced clerk who had been in the service for some time. Smith remained with him during the time of his service, and at this request became then his successor.

The official records of Mr. Fell's service, which lasted about eighteen months, show that he remained in Illinois until late in September, when he made a trip to Fort Donelson to pay the Eighty-third Illinois Infantry. After returning to Illinois, he went to Camp Morton in Indiana in November, then spent six months In Kentucky and Tennessee, going from Paducah to Cincinnati about the first of August, 1863. In the spring of that year he had a

¹⁾ Rodney Smith to Capt. E. J. Lewis, July 15, 1897. The letter is copied in full on pages 73-78 of Lewis' Life. Mr. Davis was later transferred to the office of Internal Revenue at Washington, there to serve under Fell's old friend, J. J. Lewis. Davis to Fell, Oct. 18, 1863.

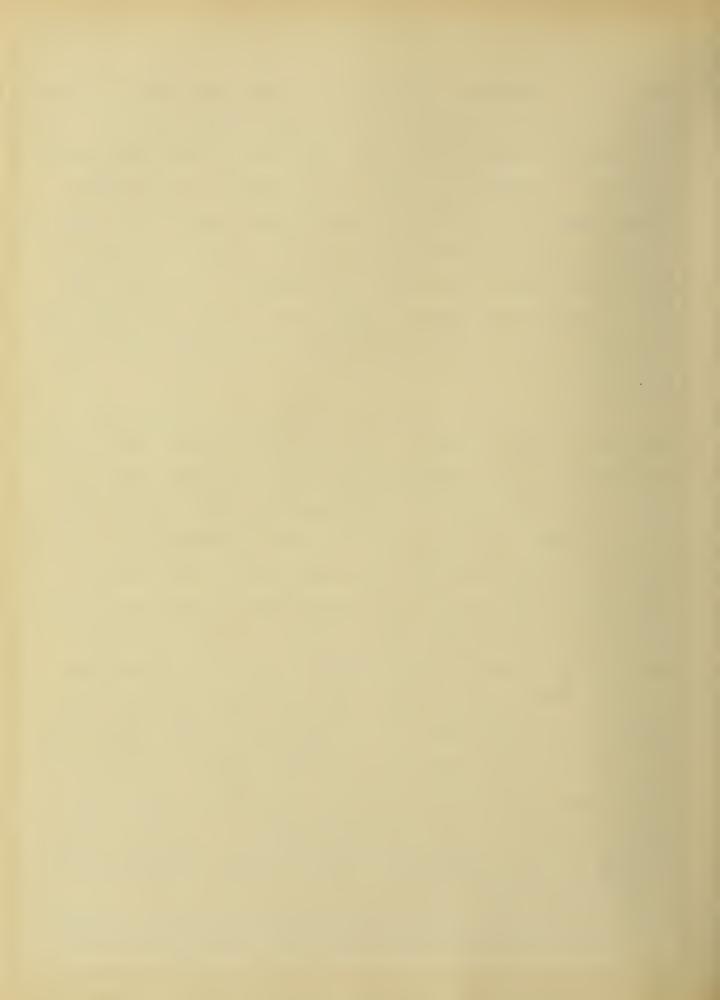


short leave of absence. He remained in Ohio for a short time only, when he returned to Kentucky, at Covington and Camp Wild Cat. His last payment was made to the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania near London, Kentucky, on September 18, 1863. The condition of his private affairs was such at that time as imperatively demanded his attention, and knowing that there were others who were capable of doing the work without loss to the service, he resigned at Christmas time. The resignation was accepted, and Fell hurried home from Washington to Normal, to look after an accumulation of business, both public and private.1

Scarcely had he arrived at home when his friends began to urge him to enter politics. The first public request was probably a "suggestion" in the Pantagraph of December 26, 1863, that he be sent to the next Congress as representative for the eighth district. In an editorial on January 26 his name was suggested again, with a repetition of the arguments in the first article. He replied at once the the public work he had already done had entailed a sacrifice of personal interests which he felt he could ill afford to make, and added, "while the district can boast of Leonard Swett, my consent to be placed in such a position would indicate a recklessness of the public weal, not to say vanity, that I trust I cannot be capable of." Some of his friends refused to consider this answer final, and made out a petition, signed by a long roll of names, begging him to accept the nomination.² Alexander Campbell

¹⁾ Major William Cumback to Fell, Feb. 4, 1864. Records of the War Department at Washington. Fell to his wife, Oct. 19, 1862, and Feb. 23, 1863.

²⁾ Mr. Fell, in his endorsement upon this paper, says he declined it "as incompatible with proper attention to my private affairs ... & for the further reason that I had solicited another and



paused in his advocacy of the "True American System of Finance" long enough to urge Fell to run for Congress; John H. Bryant, probably feeling with Campbell that Fell might take the place of the sadly missed Lovejoy, begged him not to decline. But Fell was firm in his determination not again to enter public life. Shelby M. Cullom was nominated at the convention, held June 22 in Bloomington, and elected over John T. Stuart by a large majority. It may be mentioned here that Fell was again asked to run for Congress in 1866, and again refused.

Throughout the war his support of Lincoln, with that of many other of the president's old friends of the West, was unswerving and practical. The partial emancipation message of March 6, 1862, drew from him a burst of loyal and affectionate congratulation, which reveals the wholeheartedness of his faith in Lincoln, at a time when even Illinois was rife with criticism. He took the stump again in the campaign of 1864, speaking at a series of meetings in country schoolhouses and village halls, with E. M. Prince. But he declined the post of secretary of the state central committee. 2

The news of the assassination of Lincoln came with a peculiar shock to the Illinois towns in which he had been a familiar

a better man to become a candidate - To wit Leonard Swett." No date, but probably about Feb. 1, 1864.

date, but probably about Feb. 1, 1864.

1) Alexander Campbell to Fell, April 2, 1864; Bryant to Fell, May
14, 1864; Fell in the Pantagraph, April 11, 1868.

^{14, 1864;} Fell in the Pantagraph, April 11, 1868.

2) The Pantagraph of May 23, 1862, has an account of a public meeting held the night before, at which Fell spoke warmly of the presidential policy, then much criticized. In August, another great meeting of the same sort was held. Fell to Lincold, March 17, 1862. Pantagraph, Oct. 5 and 11, 1864. Lewis Life, 80. Telegram from Thomas J. Turner to Fell, July 11, 1864.

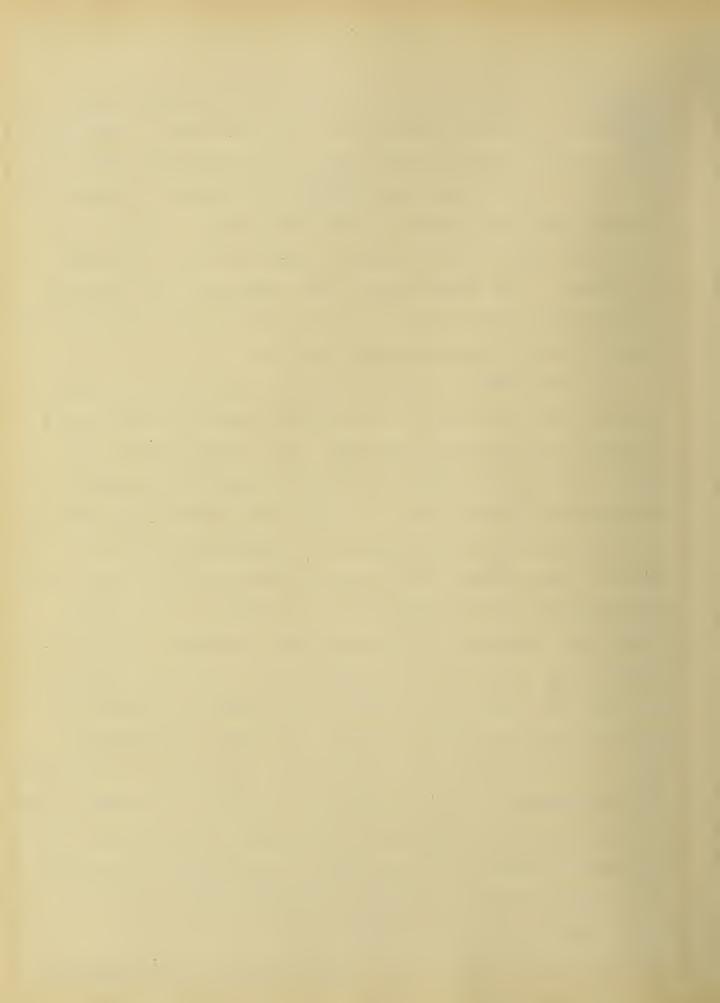


figure, and in which there were scores of his personal friends ...

Fell heard of it as he returned from a business trap. Hurrying home, but not stopping to have Old Tom unharnessed from the buggy, he told his wife the sad news, and then started back to Bloomington to verify the report and get further particulars. On the way he met his son Henry, took him into the buggy with him, and begged for details. The McLean County people expressed their sorrow at a great public meeting held in the court house square, and Fell was among the men who spoke upon that occasion.

A very dramatic episode gave to the days that followed a lively interest, and may be related here because it illustrates a prominent trait in Fell's character. Rev. Charles Ellis, the pastor of the Free Congregational Church, was a New Englander of strongly abolitionist views. In his sermon of April 23, 1865, he essayed to speak upon the subject of the assassination and its causes. His audience, which numbered many personal friends of the dead president, was perhaps as keenly sensitive to the estimate placed upon Lincoln as any audience could have been. Mr. Ellis began by saying that he believed that before God Adams, Jefferson and Washington were more to blame for the murder than Booth, for they had admitted slavery at the time when the constitution was He then blamed Lincoln for so long supporting a constitution which protected slavery, and said that "he had not the moral courage to step forth like a strong man in his might and do what his better nature told him was his highest duty. He sacrificed the demands of God that he might not offend a political party in the land," with much more to the same effect.

¹⁾ Henry C. Fell, "When Lincoln Visited Normal", in the Normalite,

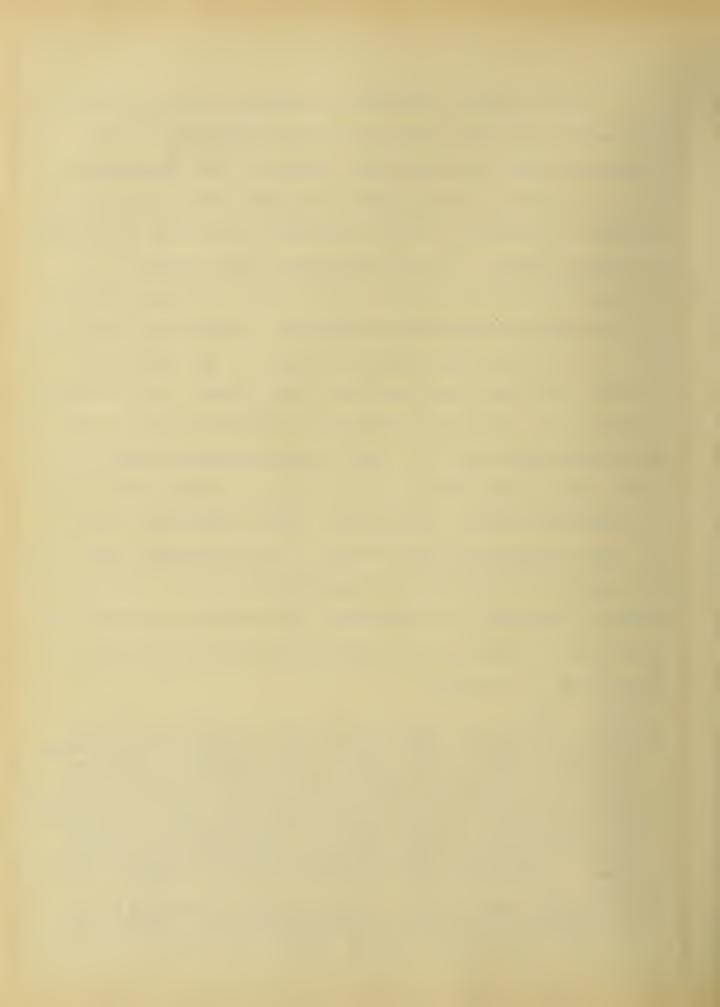


In attributing the murder of Lincoln to his own fault in no uncertain terms, Mr. Ellis aroused the indignation of the Bloomington people to fever heat. Members of the congregation were so angered that they scarcely restrained from creating a disturbance in the church. Mob violence was not unknown in Bloomingtion during the war, as the Snow brothers could testify. A meeting of the members of the church was held a few days later, for the purpose of demanding the immediate resignation of the pastor. Mr. Fell, however, spoke so forcibly of the fundamental principle upon which that church had been founded, - the principle of free speech - that he dissauded the congregation from a step which would have denied it. The Congregationalists adopted instead a set of resolutions which he offered, in which they refused to censure the sermon, asserting the right of any man to express his ideas untrammeled in their church, and reproved the "mob" which had caused a disturbance on the Sunday preceding. 2 Although thus formally vindicated, Mr. Ellis found public opinion so against him that his usefulness in that community seemed at an end, and he resigned within a few days.

June 7, 1913.

¹⁾ These two brothers, with their sister, the president of the Bloomington Ladies' Library Board, were considered to be among the finest people in the town, but were extremely unpopular because of their frank sympathy with the South. On one occasion, when recent recruiting had aroused patriotic feeling to fever heat, a crowd of men and boys bombarded the office of the Times, and destroyed it. They were not satisfied until "the crude little press and all the types were scattered on the street below." The Snows sued for damages, but could get no conviction. Luman Burr, Interview in Bloomington. Bulletin, July 6, 1813.

²⁾ Pantagraph, May 6, 1865. It is said that Dr. McCann paid for the printing of the sermon, that all might know exactly what was said, since highly colored reports were promptly circulated



concerning Mr. Ellis' words. John W. Cook says of the occurrence: "This community has often had occasion to fell a sense of pride in the citizenship of Mr. Fell, but on this occasion he illustrated a degree of fidelity to a cherished principle that lifted him to the serene heights of supreme manhood. His heart was heavy because of the national calamity and he mourned the loss of his honored friend, but the principle of free speech could not be violated without his indignant protest." A Western Pioneer. MS.

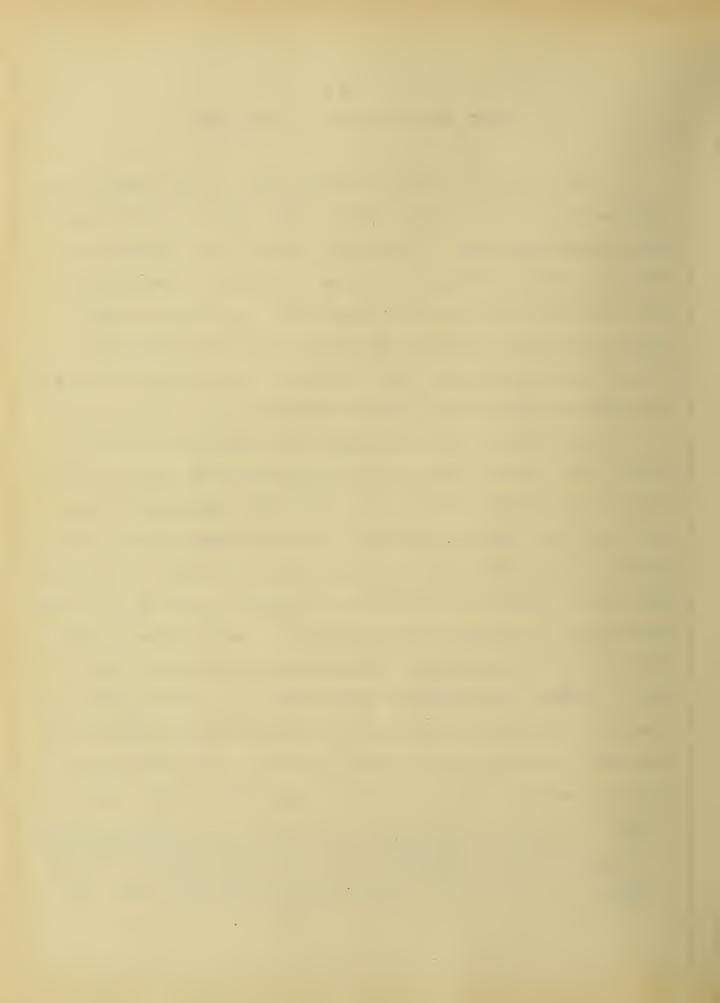


VII

Public Service After the Civil War.

While national affairs interested him, it was always in the concerns of his own community that Mr. Fell found deepest pleasure in planning and executing. In 1864 the people of the township in which he lived resolved to correct an old wrong that had caused great confusion and expense for many years. The corner marks usually set up by government surveyors could not be located in Normal township, and people came finally to the conclusion that only the outside boundaries had ever been properly run. Judge Davis, C. R. Overman, and Mr. Fell addressed a meeting on the first of October, 1864, and Mr. Fell secured the adoption of a set of resolutions, which, after reciting the conditions, recommended legislative action to secure a resurvey and an adjustment of all difficulties between those whose boundary lines conflicted. A petition was signed, a committee appointed to circulate it, and Mr. Fell was commissioned to present it at Springfield. He did this so effectively that the necessary bill was passed on February 16, 1865. A case in chancery was instituted accordingly, the next September, and a decree for the resurvey secured, the commissioners' report being confirmed by both lower and supreme courts. The decisions which were thus reached in the most friendly and united spirit, doubtless

¹⁾ Samuel Colvin et al vs. Kersey F. Fell et al. 40 <u>Illinois Reports</u> 418. The petition signed at the meeting is among the Fell MSS. It contains about twenty-five names, with subscriptions for the expenses involved, of from five to twenty-five dollars. <u>Panta-graph</u>, October 6, 1864. <u>Private Laws of Illinois</u>, 1867, III, 628-631.



saved endless expensive law suits and hard feelings. Perhaps no service of Mr. Fell to his community required more tact, foresight, and hard work to accomplish than this achievement of the resurvey of the township, or meant more to the people among whom he lived and worked:

On the same day on which he signed the resurvey bill, Governor Oglesby also approved the bill changing the name of North Bloomington to Normal. Under that name it was incorporated February 25, 1867, with a charter which embodied a perpetual no-saloon In making the deeds of sale to lots in Normal (and there is scarcely a foot of land in the town which was not at some time owned by Mr. Fell) he had always stipulated that no intoxicating liquors should be sold upon the premises. Others who owned land were in sympathy with his ideas, and it was understood from the first that Normal should always be, as Bloomington was in 1854 and 1855, a prohibition town. The original town charter of Normal provided for a strictly temperance regime. In 1866 the charter became impracticable for the growing town, and had to be amended. The legislature of Illinois was not so ardently temperate in its sentiments as was Normal; and interests which hoped to gain advantage from a change, tried to induce it to omit the temperance clause from the revised charter. Hearing of this, Mr. Fell called a citizens' mass meeting at the Baptist church on November 22, 1866, at which the people discussed the situation and adopted a set of resolutions, ready to handas usually. 2 At the suggestion of John

¹⁾ Private Laws, 1867, III, 321-336. The seal was affixed to the charter March 4, 1867.

²⁾ The resolutions are given, with an account of the meeting, in the Pantagraph, December 19, 1866.

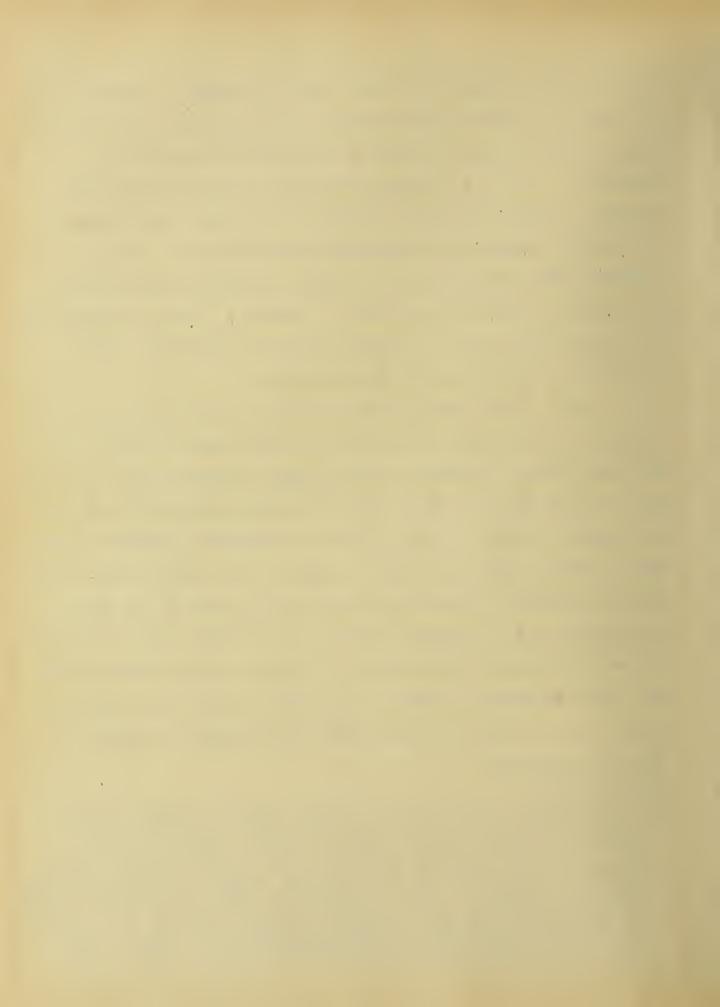


Dodge, a close friend of Fell and a man thoroughly in sympathy with his ideas, the people present signed the resolutions, and other signatures were secured before an adjourned meeting held on December 6. At this subsequent meeting a thorough canvas was reported, in which President Edwards of the normal school had cooperated by securing the signatures of the students. Over a thousand names appeared on the petition, including those of every man, woman, and child in the town. William A. Pennell was appointed to go with Mr. Fell to present it to the legislature, which granted the charter with the desired clause.

Mr. Fell had been able by careful attention to his affairs largely to free himself of debt by this time, and so felt free to give some time to furthering the political prospects of his friends, and to a rest which he felt that several years of unremitting labor had earned. Early in July of 1865 he received an invitation from General Thomas Osborn, who was in charge of the Twenty-fourth Army Corps at Richmond, to visit that city as the guest of the corps. He accepted this invitation, and while in the East went to New York and had an interview with Beecher. Upon his return he was busied with the test case for securing the decree of resurvey, spoken of before, and with efforts tofacilitate the discharge of certain Illinois regiments.²

¹⁾ Lewis Life, 57.

²⁾ C. Macalester to Fell, Nov. 7, 1864; Thomas O. Osborn to Fell, July 1, 1865; John H. Bryant to Fell, Nov. 18, 1865; Lyman Trumbull to Fell, Dec. 27, 1866; Stephen A. Douglas to Fell, March 21, 1866; Governor Oglesby to Fell, Sept. 16, 1865; Fell to E. J. Lewis, July 26, 1865, quoting a letter from himself to Secretary Stanton. (Lewis Letters, in MSS of the McLean County Historical Association.) These letters referred to one published substantially in the Pantagraph of July 13, 1865, from Lewis, in which he complained of being compelled to lie idly in camp with all his men, after all action had ceased. Lewis could



During the years following the close of the war Mr. Fell devoted much time and effort to the building up of Bloomington and Normal. He planted trees indefatigably, sought to build up his normal school, and encouraged every enterprise which could bring desirable citizens or increased wealth to the sections in which he was interested. No public enterprise asked his aid in vain, it is said; certainly the lists of his interests is a long one.

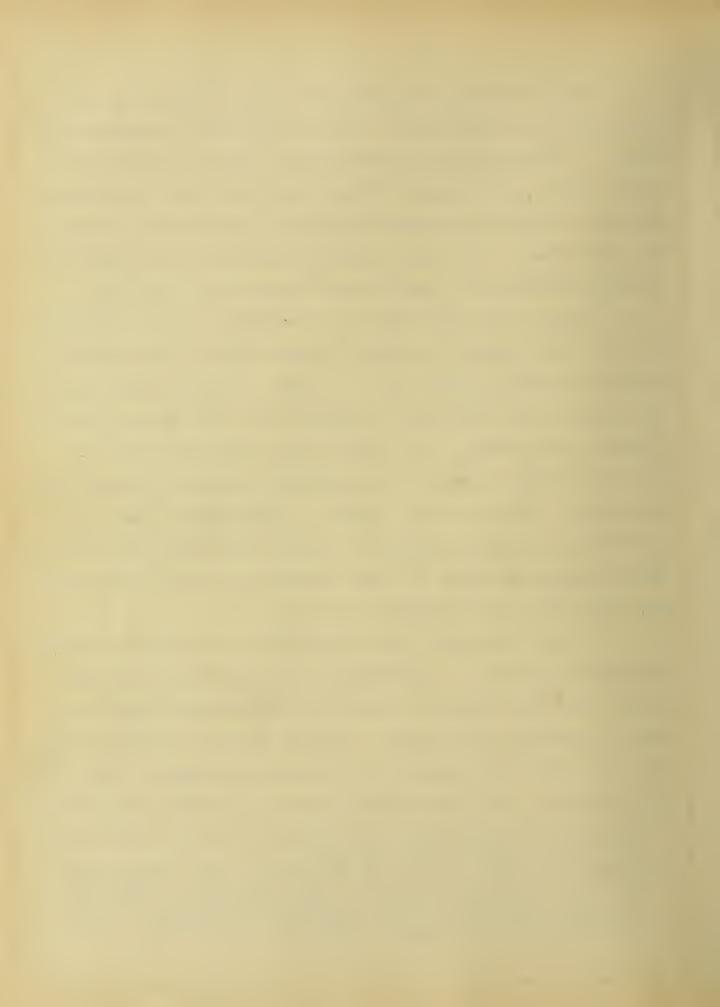
During the first years of his residence in North Bloomingtion, Mr. Fell planned to develop the new town as a manufacturing place as much as a school town. In 1857 he himself became much interested in the production of sorghum, for which people then predicted a great future. He planted about seven acres, set up a mill, with press, vats and reducing pans, and put his product upon the market. There was not, however, an encouraging demand for it, and farmers generally declined to trouble themselves with this crop, which required an outlay of labor incommensurate with the returns.

Mr. Fell after a time abandoned the project.

At about the same time he secured the location of a foundry at North Bloomington. One Blakesly, his partner in this enterprise, built the foundry, and also the huge boarding-house which was to accommodate the workmen. Addison Reeder, a skilled mechanic, was brought from Laytown to be foreman and manager. Some cast iron fixtures, used in the construction of the normal school build-

have been relieved at any time, but did not like to leave camp (at Meridian, Miss.) without his men.

¹⁾ In 1842 and 1843, he had been interested in some experiments looking to the making of sugar from Indian corn. No account of these experiments remains. His conclusion was that the thing was possible, but not commercially profitable. Interview with Henry Fell, May 31, 1913.

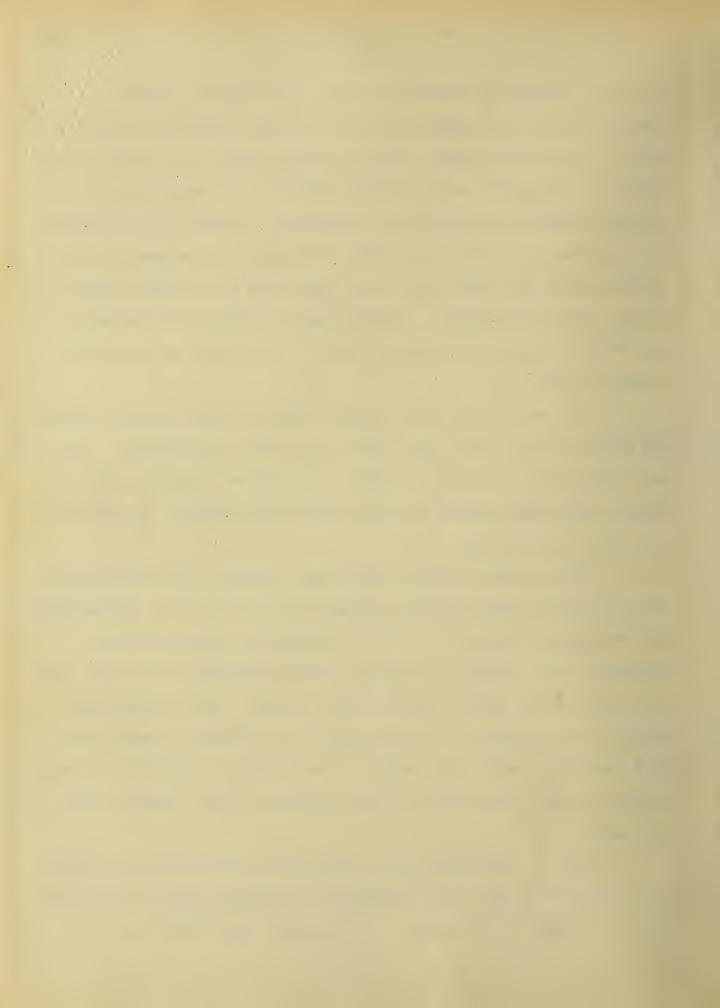


ings, were turned out before the enterprise failed, partly at least because of the impossibility of getting sufficient workmen; and Mr. Fell became liable for the greater part of the loss of the venture. The plant was used about 1877 for the manufacture of a patent furnace, by one Ruttan, a Canadian, who was the inventor of a once-popular ventilating system. Neither the furnace nor the stoves, which then and later were turned out at the same factory, found a very good market. Normal was not destined to become a manufacturing town, and after a time Mr. Fell gave up the effort to make it one.

This was in spite of the fact that in 1867 two coal-shafts had been sunk, and had found coal, in or near Bloomington. Mr. Fell was financially interested in that one which was located near the Chicago and Alton tracks, and which has been operated successfully up to the present time.

One business venture which was a success from every point of view was the large hotel in Normal which he built in partnership with William A. Pennell. It was a four-story Mansard-roofed structure, with spacious rooms and wide verandahs, and a ball room that made it the social center of both towns. Ben Stanley was brought from Tuscola to be its manager, and became a famous host. Good hostleries were rare, and this one became a landmark. It was burned in 1872, after Mr. Fell had disposed of his share in the ownership.

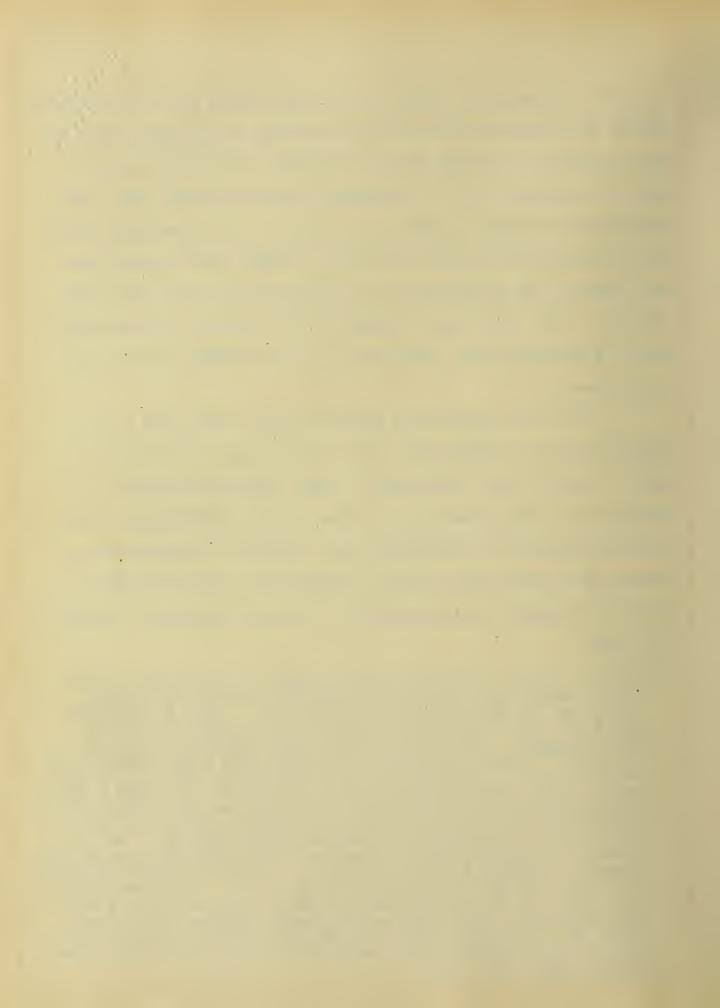
None of the enterprises upon which the state entered after the close of the war were of greater importance than the establishing of the state university. It has been noted from the first



efforts, sidetracked in favor of a normal school and later deferred during the struggle between North and South, its friends hoped to have eventually one many-sided institution, wherein training of many kinds might be had. No sooner was the war well over, than the project was again urged upon Illinois. In Bloomington interest was especially active, for people thought that now the time was come for the expansion of the normal school into a real university. The funds made available by the Morrill Act would provide for the industrial university of which Turner and Fell had long dreamed.

The first legislative action for the school was a bill authorizing its establishment, and throwing open its location to bids. The bill was introduced in 1865, but was defeated. A similar bill was introduced two years later, providing for elections in counties or cities upon the question of raising money wherewith to make a bid for the location of a state university. This bill passed, and was approved by Governor Oglesby on January 25, 1867.²

¹⁾ An interesting but unsuccessful attempt to establish a great state university in Chicago took place early in the decade following the passage of the Morrill Act. John F. Eberhart tells the story of this movement in his contribution to the There was to be a great school in Chicago, Fell Memorial. "with affiliated institutions throughout the state, especially Our plan was to get donations of \$100,000 from at Normal ... each of ten different men in the state and to have them incorporated into the constitution of the state at the constitutional convention in 1870 a provision for the maintainance of the The \$1,000,000 had been duly pledged. Mr. Fell, university. himself, pledged \$100,000.00 and had found six other men in the state who pledged \$100,000.00 each. I also pledged \$100,000.00 and found two other men besides myself ... " John Wentworth, upon whom the two leaders had relied to push the project in the convention, grew cold in the cause, however, and it was Probably Turner's plan to put the state university upon a constitutional basis appealed to Fell as a better idea. 2) Public Laws, 1867: 122.

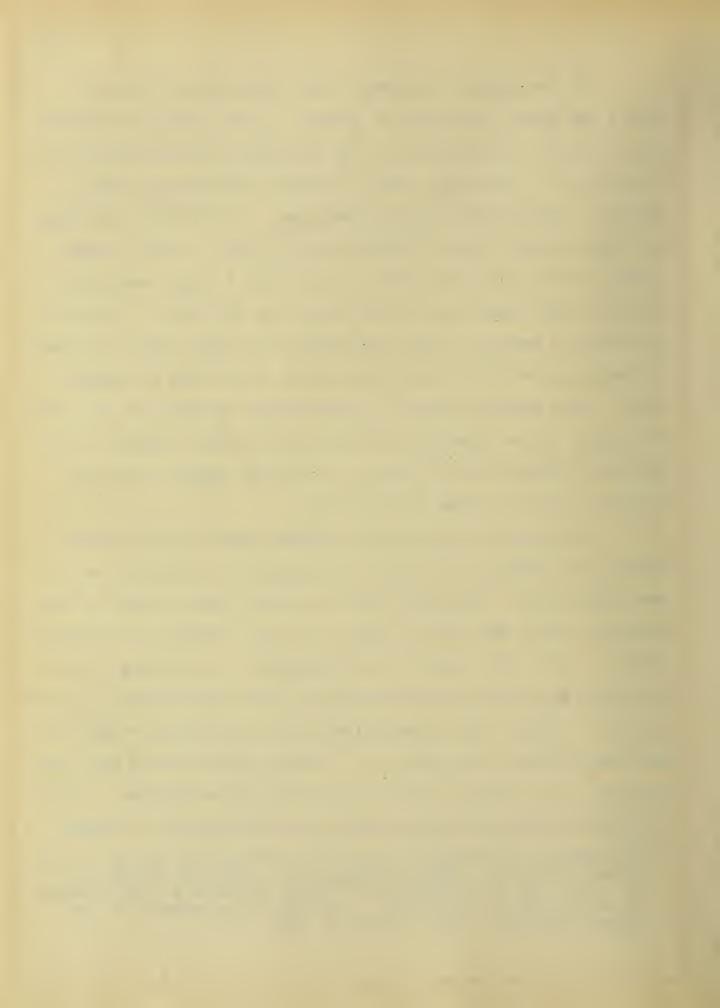


In the meantime, however, other forces were at work to locate the school definitely at Urbana. After President Buchanan had vetoed the Morrill Bill in 1859 and before Lincoln approved of it in 1862, Dr. Charles A. Hunt of Urbana conceived the idea of securing a state school for his own town. A "seminary" building was being erected then at the north end of what is now Illinois Field, and Dr. Hunt's plan was to use it for a larger and better endowed school than merely local support could insure. He therefore wrote a memorial, which was signed by a large number of Urbana citizens, and which was presented to the legislature in January, 1861. This memorial plead for agricultural education on the twofold basis of the elevation of labor and of public economy. The time was unpropitious for such an enterprise, however, and the memorial came to nothing at that time.

No sooner was peace again restored than the citizens of Urbana set themselves to secure the industrial university, as it was then called. Jonathan Turner, long the heroic leader of the movement, hoped than when it came this school would be at Jackson-ville. Jesse Fell wanted it at Bloomington, a rounding out of the university which had been begun with the normal school ten years before. Several other communities in the state hoped to gain it, and made generous offers for it. But the Urbana people were both earliest in the field, and most resourceful in expedients. They introduced a bill definitely locating the institution at Urbana,

¹⁾ The "Urbana and Champaign Institute" was incorporated by an act approved Feb. 21, 1861. Private Laws, 1861, pp. 24-26.

Dr. Hunt entered the army as a surgeon and died at the hospital at Mound City in July, 1863. Joseph O. Cunningham, in the Times (Champaign, Ill.) of May 21, 1910.



County were made good. Other towns were indignant at this method, since it gave no change for them to compete. Bloomington felt especially agrieved, for it meant the death of a long cherished hope; and Jacksonville, because it had supported Turner through the long years of his unsuccessful efforts. Not a little heroic sacrifice had entered into the generous donation of Bloomington in 1857, made at a time when hard times were threatening and war seemed iminent. One of the arguments most used by those who raised the money was that in time other schools might be added until a real university was founded.

Mr. Fell's own conception of the educational system of the state was a comprehensive one, involving a university comprising every necessary technical and cultural school, at the head of a system of common schools which included industrial training in their curriculums. Teachers, he said, would profit by the breadth gained by coming into contact with those who were in training for other kinds of work; and as education was a field as dignified as that of any other calling. It was practicable to make the normal school one of the colleges in a university. To supplement this theoretical justification, he set to work to raise a subscription which should rival, if not exceed, that of Urbana.

His efforts were now even more earnest, if that were possible, than they had beenten years before. He wrote a memorial

Public Laws of Illinois, 1867: 123-129.
 Illinois Industrial University: Report of the Committee (Pamphlet no date); circular letter, Jan. 25, 1866; J. B. Turner, "Industrial University", in Jacksonville Journal, Feb. 8, 1866; Subscription lists. All in Turner MSS.



presenting the claims of Bloomington, which was received by the legislature about the first of February, 1867. He and a number of others went to Springfield to use what influence they might to secure the acceptance, or at least the consideration of the bid. The decision hung fire during the greater part of February, while the lobbies of Champaign, McLean, Morgan, and Logan counties pushed their respective claims. The people of Champaign County, knowing the manner of men they had to deal with in Turner and Fell, had elected to the legislature, especially for the purpose of pleading their cause, a man who was almost, if not quite, Fell's equal in powers of persuasion. This was Clark R. Griggs. 1

In spite of all the efforts for a more unified system of higher education, the state university was won by Champaign County. The bill was approved at the end of February. An inconsequential sop was thrown to the defeated parties in the shape of a supplementary bill, passed March 8, which provided that the trustees might locate the school in McLean, Logan or Morgan counties if Champaign County failed to fulfill its contract; a contingency which, of course, never arose.

The new state institution was, at first, scarcely more of a

No shadow of reproach attaches to the methods used by Clark R. Griggs, in winning friends for the Urbana location. There were open accusations of bribery at the time, however, which involved some members of the Urbana lobby. E. M. Prince, in his contribution to the Fell Memorial tells the story of the

¹⁾ Petition to the legislature, signed by Jesse W. Fell and fifteen others of Bloomington and vicinity. Illinois State Journal, Jan. 17, 1867. The subscriptions as given in the petition was five hundred thousand dollars; the Pantagraph put it at five hundred and fifty thousand dollars. (Lewis Life, 89.) Mr. Fell gave fifteen thousand dollars of this, the largest single subscription except that of Judge Davis. There was a site of 140 acres, and many smaller cash subscriptions. Both this and the offer of Jacksonville exceeded that of Champaign County.



university than the normal school had been. It was small, poorly endowed, limited in curriculum and service. Its friends wanted to see it really fulfil the purpose for which it had been created. The Northern Illinois Horticultural Society, meeting in Bloomington on March 2, 1870, besides criticizing the struggling institution roundly, passed a resolution which showed its kindlier attitude toward it. This was that the constitutional convention then in session should endow it by a constitutional provision. 1

But Fell had anticipated this action. Representing the State Teachers' Association, he had addressed a memorial to the convention on the last day of January preceding, which expressed

Feb. 10, 1867; History of the Champaign "Elephant" by One of the Ring, broadside, dated in pencil March 21, 1867; certificate of expenditure by Henry E. Dammer, April 2, 1876. All in Turner MSS.

1) Both Turner and Gregory were at this meeting. The latter invited the members to visit Champaign and see what was being done at the university for themselves. Turner's acceptance marked the beginning of his personal friendship for Gregory, and his hearty cooperation with him in building it up. Carriel, Life of Jonathan Baldwin Turner, 227-231. Joseph O. Cunningham, interview, May, 1914.

proposal of a bribe to the Bloomington men. Prince was among the Bloomington lobbyists. He went one morning, he says, to Mr. Fell's room, where he "laid out the work for the day in behalf of Bloomington. Quite a number of Bloomington people were present, but Mr. Fell was the leader. He went over the names of the members of the legislature, speaking of the characters of each and of the arguments most likely to be effective with them. "Mr. Norval Dixon was one of the company and said that Urbana had contributed quite a large amount of money to influence the members of the legislature, but said that he thought a few hundred follars from McLean County would give it to them, as the members preferred McLean to Champaign. Mr. Fell immediately spoke up and said, 'I am willing to procure a subscription that will be conceded to be the greatest of any of the towns, but I will not contribute a dollar to influence any member of the legislature to vote for us. I will throw the whole thing up before I will have anything of the kind. " See also Affidavits, Jan. 25, 1867; G. W. Minier to Turner,



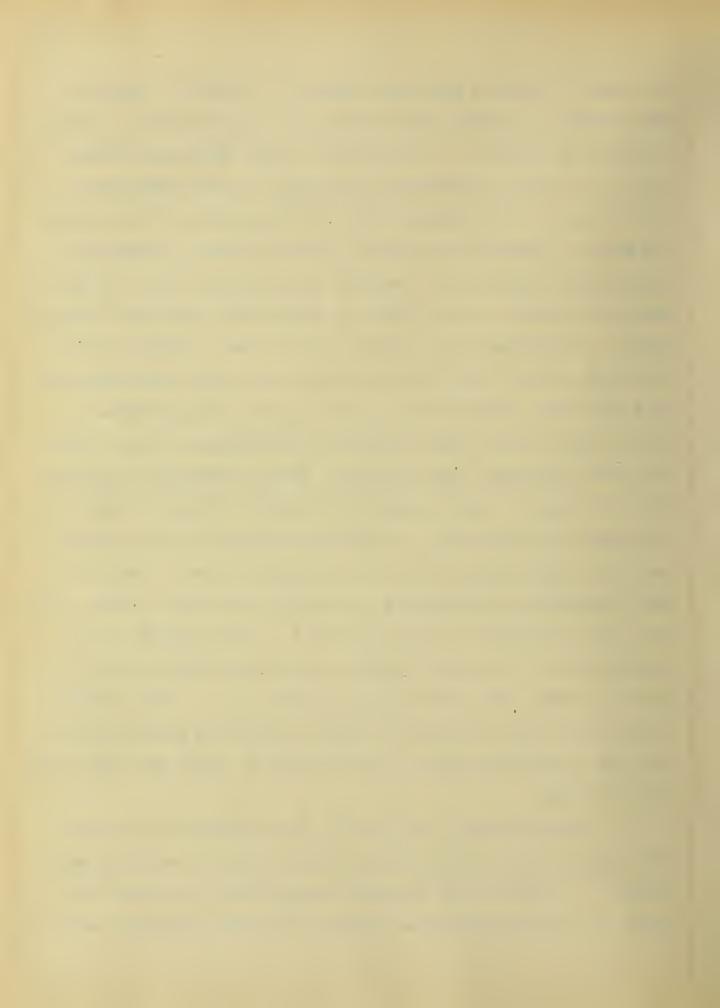
his ideas of possible means and measures. It did not dictate an exact scheme of support and management for the university, although it suggested several. It appealed to state pride, mentioning the fact that eight surrounding states had already established universities. It contained also a vivid prophecy of the service now actually rendered the state in the soil survey, entomology, engineering, agriculture, chemistry, mining methods, and the use of waste by-products. But he adds: To accomplish these grand results, however, we must have, not a university in name - another pretentious high school - but what has not yet been fully organized upon this continent, a University in fact; a grand and comprehensive school, equal in its scope and power of development to our present and future greatness, and in harmony with the advancing civilization of the age. Anything that falls short of this, at least in its scope and constitution, is alike unworthy of us as a people, and of the age in which it is our privilege to live. The day of small endeavors in enterprises of this kind, and with a people like ours, has passed away, never to return." Then follows a very earnest reply to the chief argument being urged against such a plan - that the state was too poor to afford it. The plea was on the whole a very eloquent one, but it failed to gain its point with the constitution-makers, who declined to saddle the state with any such burden.

Besides writing this plea for the teachers of the state,

Fell traveled much in the interests of the effort, and wrote many

letters. A draft of the proposed constitutional provision is

found in a set of resolutions passed by the State Teachers' Asso-



ciation.1

In connection with the constitutional convention of 1870 one other occurrence is worthy of mention. Joseph Medill, a member of the convention, wishing to procure the strong influence of Governor Palmer in favor of the adoption of the new constitution, asked Fell to call on the governor for an expression of opinion.

This Fell did, in a letter published in May. About a month later the governor answered in a long letter which was a strong plea for the proposed constitution. The reply was widely published, and doubtless had much to do with the subsequent vote.²

Although his efforts for the location and endowment of the university failed, in another direction Fell succeeded better.

The legislature in 1865 authorized the erection of a soldiers' orphans' home, which was to be located by a commission. Fell, deeply disappointed at the failure to build up the long-hoped-for university at Normal, set briskly to work to secure this smaller institution for his own community. There was an initial appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars by the state. Heading a subscription list with a generous donation, Fell fot from the people of Bloomington and Normal an additional fifty thousand dollars. Rock Island, Decatur, Irvington and Springfield competed for the home, but the Normal subscription was the largest and the

¹⁾ Notes endorsed upon an envelope containing a copy of the memorial by Fell. Henry Wing to Fell, Jan. 3, 1870; Pantagraph, Feb. 1, 1871; "'State University' - To the Members of the Illinois Constitutional Convention," a reprint from the Pantagraph and the Illinois State Journal, in Illinois Teacher, XVI, 65.

2) Palmer to Fell, June 18, 1870.



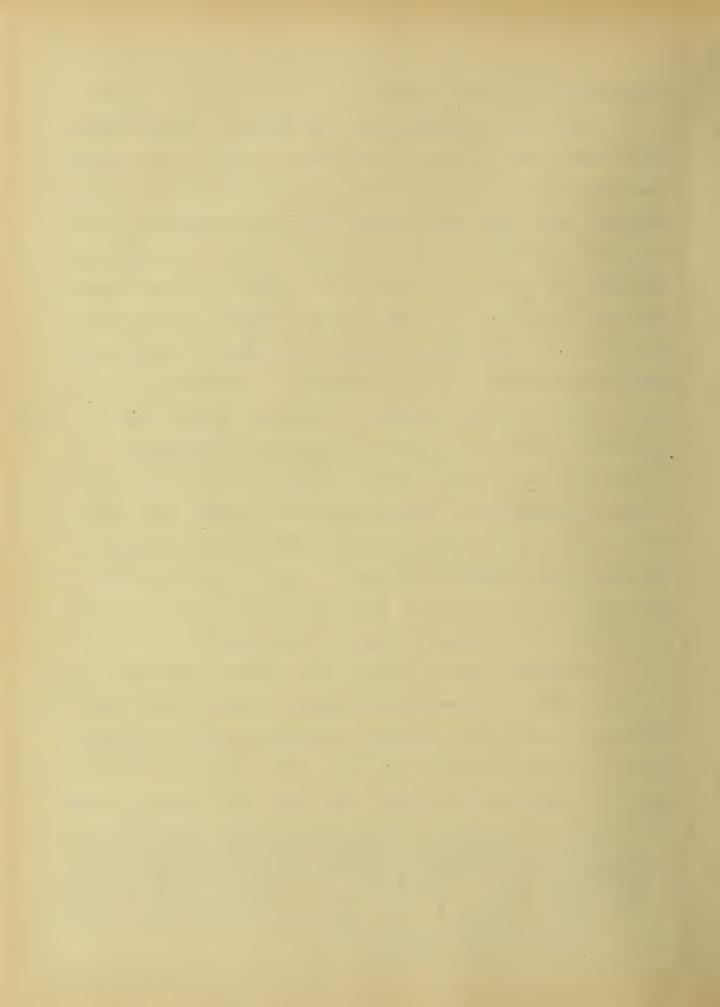
commissioners decided unanimously in its favor, May 5, 1867.1

Mr. Fell's connection with the Soldiers' Orphans' Home did not end with its location at Normal. Saying that, as homeless and almost friendless children they would have to be mainly dependent upon their own exertions for a livelihood after their dismissal from the Home, he claimed that it was both wisdom and obligation in the state to give to its charges not only a shelter, but a training that would make them self-supporting upon reaching maturity. In other words, he wanted the school, which was conducted at the home, to be a trade-school. But vocational education was at that time almost unknown in the United States, and was looked upon with disfavor as a dangerously paternal institution. trades were taught at the Soldiers' Orphans' Home, and Mr. Fell was bitterly disappointed. "Don't call it my school," he is said to have rejoined when a friend asked him how his school prospered. "It is not what I wanted it to be." Thirty years after its founding, those features which Mr . Fell had in vain sought to incorporate, were added to the Soldiers' Orphans' Home school.2

A somewhat similar project under private management failed to materialize. This was "The College for Soldiers and their Sons" which was to occupy the buildings of Western Union College and Military Academy at Fulton, Illinois. Mr. Fell held a limited number of shares in this scheme, but seems never actively to have

¹⁾ A characteristic story is told of this canvas, concerning Fell and Davis. Seeing his friend approaching his office, Judge Davis declared to Lawrence Weldon, who tells the story (Fell Memorial, p. 40): "There's Fell. I reckon he wants me to subscribe more money. I won't do it. I won't do it. Reckon I'll have to, though." Fell did indeed induce him to increase his already generous subscription.

2) E. M. Prince in Fell Memorial, p. 41.

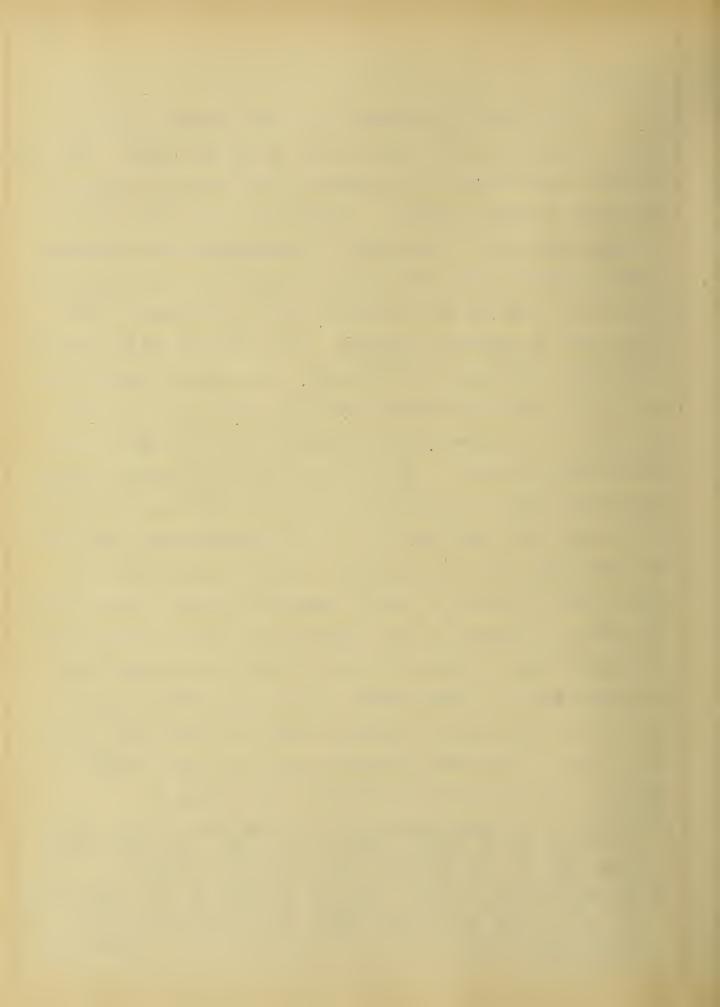


pushed it.

Shortly after the dedication of the Soldiers' Orphans' Home, a competition for a state reform school was opened. Mr. Fell started a subscription in Bloomington, which reached a total of over sixty thousand dollars1. There was at that time, however, a strong opposition to the policy of concentration which he advocated. The state was still imperfectly unified, and state institutions were regarded as the perquisites of citizenship, to be distributed as equally as possible. The interests of the institutions were a secondary consideration. The prejudice against the policy of concentration was so strong, in fact, as to persuade Mr. Fell of the wisdom of abandoning his effort to locate the new institution in Normal. He did this the more willingly, perhaps, because the people of another town in which he was interested began to hope that they might win it. This town was Pontiac, where Mr. Fell had owned land for many years. He found enthusiastic response when he started to raise a subscription there, and was able to induce the township to vote bonds to the amount of twenty-five thousand dollars, to which the board of supervisors added fifty thousand dollars in county bonds. He and his brother Kersey offered the site for the buildings, sixty-four acres lying close to the town. The total subscription was ninety-one thousand dollars, a bid which won the location of the school.²

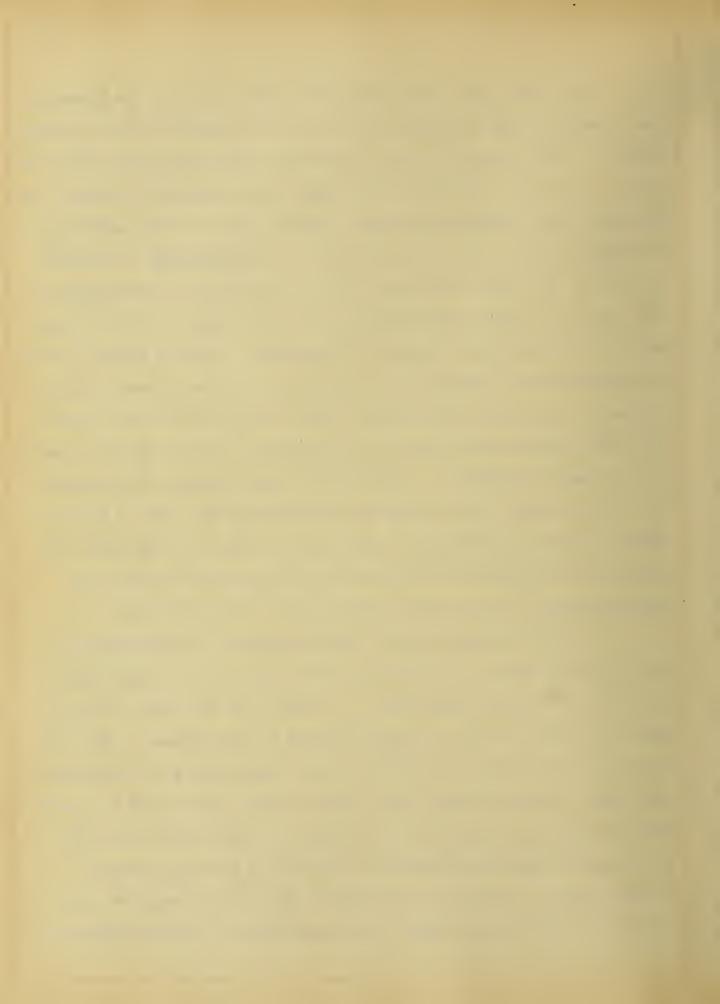
2) Pantagraph July 8, 1869. The Fell MSS include the subscription list and map used in the campaign. Comments by Mr. Fell are to the effect that "we did not regard such an institution as a junior penitentiary, but, as the name implies, as a reformatory institution."

¹⁾ Based on the "Classification of the Normal Bids for the "State Industrial Reform School" among the Fell MSS, and exclusive of five subscriptions dependent upon a particular location. Lewis says (Life, p. 99) that the subscription was \$35,567.

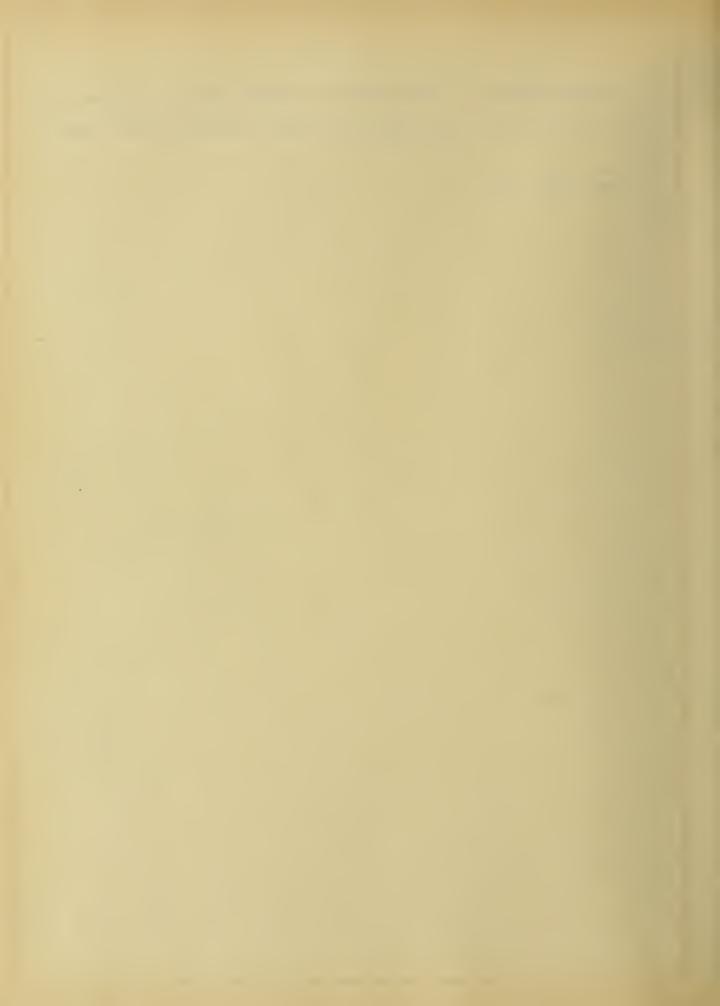


The last state institution for which Fell and the Bloomington community made a strong effort, was the Eastern Illinois Insane The location of this institution was before the people in 1877. Mr. Fell, chairman of the committee appointed to direct the efforts of the Bloomington people, made a report of the advantages of location there, which was printed in the Pantagraph of August Its chief interest lies in its advocacy of advantage to the state as a whole rather than to any one region - his old argument of "concentration versus scatteration." Modern ideas of efficient management counted for so little at the time, however, when opposed to sectional jealousy and local ambition, that the really excellent inducements offered by Bloomington were declined in favor of the town of Kankakee. Probably the same reasons were accountable for the fact that a committee composed of Mr. Fell, Lawrence Weldon and Hamilton Spencer, appointed in 1885 to investigate the chances of Bloomington for securing the projected home for the feeble-minded, did not make a campaign for the institution.

In 1871 occurred one of those movements for changing the capital which occur in a state in which the center of population is still shifting and uncertain. In March of that year, Peoria made an effort to have the capital moved to that place. The discussion provoked many statements of the shortcomings of Springfield, and when it became evident that the idea was to be thought of seriously, Bloomington people had a meeting in their court house "to consider the question of making an effort to have the capital brought here." After the explanatory speeches a committee, of which Mr. Fell was one member, was appointed to prepare an appeal



to the legislature. The committee probably made inquiries before doing the bidding of the townspeople, for nothing further came of it. later lat



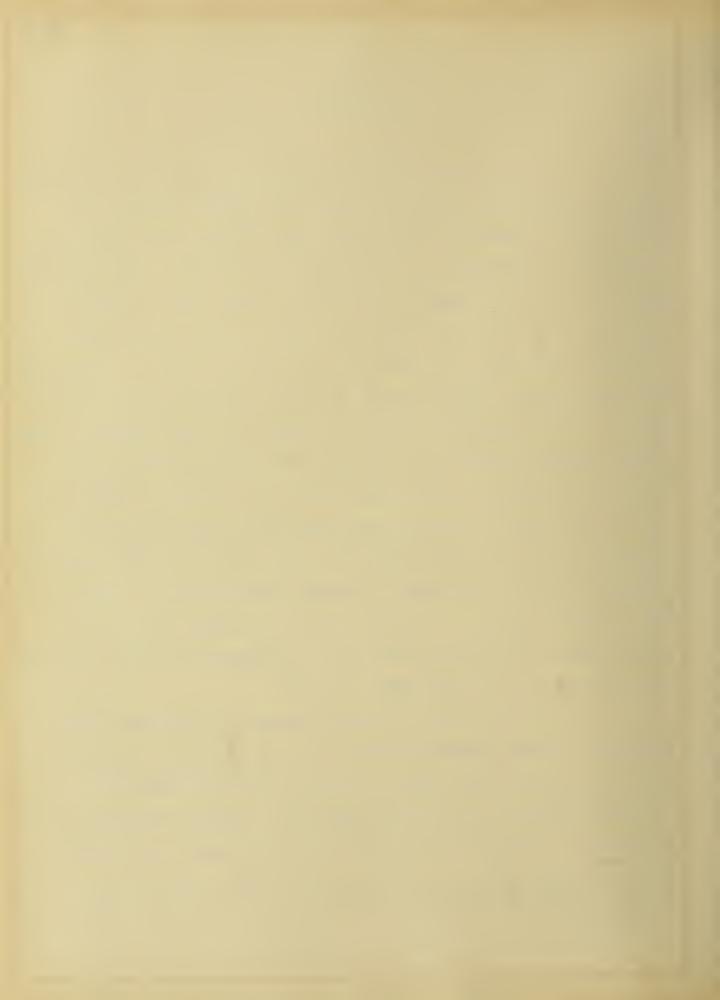
VIII. Railroads.

Mr. Fell's active efforts on behalf of railroads for central Illinois seem to have begun in 1835, when General William L. D. Ewing sent to a number of Bloomington men a request for their cooperation in building the Illinois Central Railroad. This document was addressed to the leading men of Bloomington, "Gen. Covell, J. W. Fell, Esq., Col. Gridley, Jas. Allen, Esq., Doct. Jno. F. Henry, H. Crow, Esq., Jno. W. S. Moon Esq. Doct. Miller &c." It apprised them that General Ewing proposed to present at "the called session of our General Assembly" a bill for a railroad from "Ottawa, or some other suitable point on the Illinois river, through Bloomington, Decatur, Shelbyville, Vandalia and then to the mouth (or near it) of the Ohio river on the most practicable and convenient route." He asked their opinions on the project, and indicated a willingness to appreciate the cooperation of McLean County people. came of this project. A little later Fell became one of the incorporators of the Pekin, Bloomington and Wabash Railroad, which was to unite the Illinois and Wabash rivers. 2

The Illinois Central Railroad became the backbone of the elaborate internal improvement bill of 1837, was taken up by the Great Northern Railway Company in 1843, and was the especial care of Senator Sidney Breese during 1843-1850. Senator Douglas finally succeeded in endowing it by a grant of public lands, in September,

¹⁾ October 20, 1835.

²⁾ Private laws of Illinois, 1836:8-12. E. M. Prince in Fell Memorial, 43.



1850, and construction began on December 23, 1851.1

In the Congressional grant which secured the Illinois Central railroad, the termini of Galena and Cairo were stipulated, but the course of the road between these two points was left open.

Powerful influences were endeavoring to change it from Ewing's proposed route eastward and westward, and particularly to Peoria and to Springfield. General Gridley, elected to the state senate in 1850, worked untiringly to maintain the original route through Bloomington, and finally succeeded in securing a clause in the act of incorporation with this provision. This was in February, 1851. The railroad was to pass through Clinton and Decatur, towns in which Mr. Fell was much interested, as well as through Bloomington. In the spring of 1852 the road was started northward from Bloomington to meet the line already begun from LaSalle southward. Regular traffic on the completed road began May 23, 1853.

On the day when ground was broken near David Davis' home for the Illinois Central Railroad, 3 engineers were locating an extension of the Chicago and Alton, (then called the Alton and San - gamon), from Springfield to Bloomington. Work progressed so rapidly that trains were running on this road in just five months from the date of location. Passengers from St. Louis could change at Bloomington to the Illinois Central and again at LaSalle to the Rock Island route, and so to Chicago. At Bloomington there was no direct connection for many years between the "Chicago and

3) May 15, 1852.

¹⁾ Howard G. Brownson, History of the <u>Illinois Central System</u>, 14-53 (MSS).

²⁾ Bloomington Intelligencer, May 25, 1853.



Mississippi, of which the Alton and Sangamon was a branch, and the Illinois Central. The transfer was by cabs and omnibuses.

In 1853 Fell secured the right of way for the Chicago and Mississippi from Bloomington to Joliet, and work began promptly.

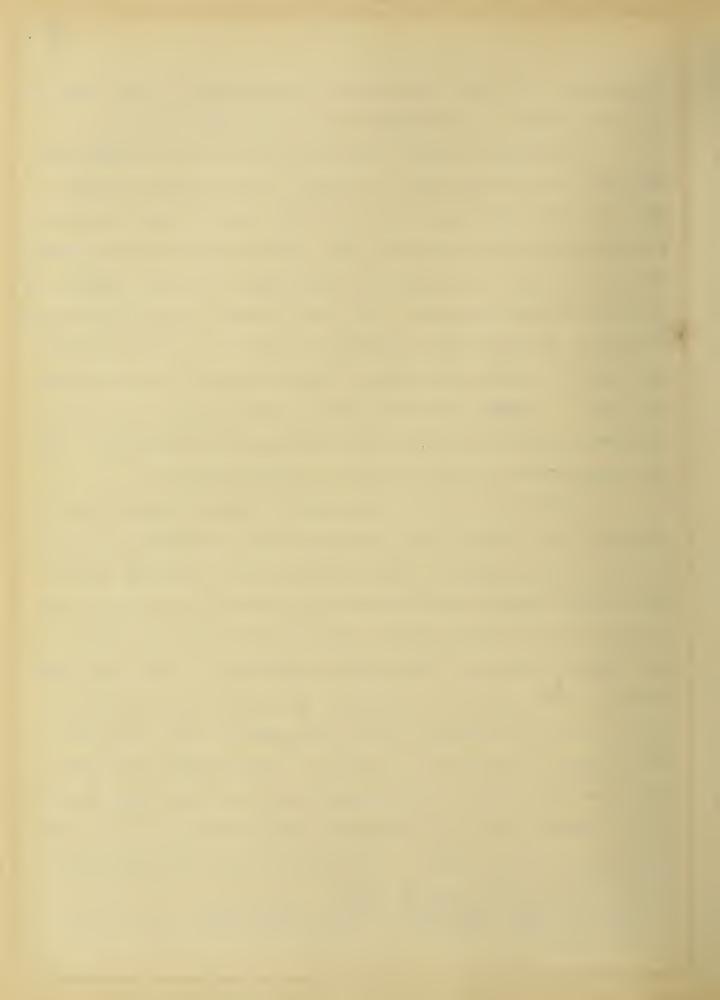
Fell, who had lands along this route from which he hoped to reap a profit, also secured from O. H. Lee, who had charge of the building of the extension, a contract for himself and his brother Thomas, to furnish ties and cord-wood. The sale of lands in and about Pontiac Lexington, Towanda, Normal and Joliet, of course, netted him handsome returns for the investment of time and money for the Chicago and Alton. Indeed, the dovetailing of enterprises, the working-together-for-good of all the forces that made for prosperity, was an accomplishment for which he had a peculiar talent.

In the meantime, ten and a quarter acres of ground had been conveyed to the "Chicago and Mississippi" for the depots and shops which have since helped to make Bloomington an industrial center.

Many citizens wanted the station-house of the new road built close to that of the Illinois Central, with the point of intersection near the present site of the Wesleyan University. But Fell, with an eye to the founding of a suburban town at the intersection of the two roads, at a point farther west where he and others had secured land, stood for its location at a considerable distance.

The Bloomington station was located about a mile from the Illinois Central station, and the intersection formed a center for the new town of North Bloomington. On August 4, 1854, The Pantagraph

¹⁾ O. H. Lee to Fell, July 4, 1853.
2) John H. Burnham, Our Duty to Future Generations. An oration delivered April 21, 1905.



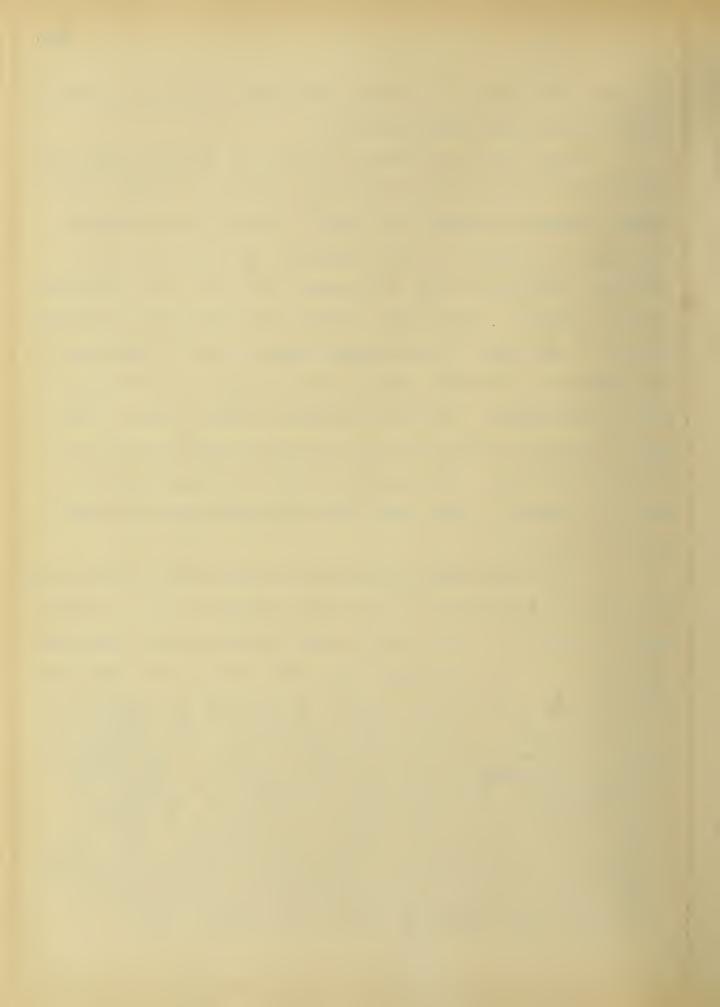
announced that trains were running from Alton to Joliet, the full length of the Chicago and Mississippi. 1

Central Illinois needed in addition an east-and-west road, and in 1853 Fell and others organized a company to realize a projected "Wabash and Warsaw" railroad. On the third of May he addressed a meeting at Carthage favoring a proposed road from LaFayette, Indiana, through Bloomington, Pekin and other Illinois towns to Warsaw. Bloomington citizens subscribed fifty thousand dollars to the stock of this proposed road by June 15, 1853, and the county court ordered a vote on a one hundred thousand dollar county subscription. The fifty thousand dollars, however, was later rejected on technical grounds, and the order of the court revoked accordingly. The enthusiasm that had been so general, died out suddenly at this rebuff, and was reäwakened later with some difficulty.

Mr. Fell had much opposition during this period from persons who would not be served by a road of the proposed route. A Pekin paper attacked him for advocating a road through towns in which he had holdings. The Bloomington Times also attacked him vigorously,

¹⁾ The tracks of the Chicago and Rock Island were used from Joliet to Chicago until March 18, 1858, when the road transferred to its own tracks. Transfer from Alton to St. Louis was by boat upon the Mississippi for some time after this. Lewis Life, 42.

²⁾ The Intelligencer, of March 23, 1853, gives the names of the corporators of "The Bloomington and Wabash R. R. Company" as follows: David Davis, Isaac Funk, James Miller, A. Gridley, E. H. Didlake, R. O. Warriner, John W. Ewing, W. H. Temple, Wm. T. Major, John Moore, John E. McClun, Jesse W. Fell, J. H. Robinson, A. Withers, Wm. T. Flagg, W. H. Holmes. The issue of April 27 has an account of the meeting at which Mr. Fell was sent "to the western part of the route" to interest people in the venture. Also see issues of May 18, July 20, Aug. 10, Aug. 24, 1853; Pantagraph, A pr. 26 and June 28, 1853.



to be answered by Mr. Fell himself in <u>The Intelligencer.</u> He had by this time become the local director of the proposed road. On September he advocated the resubscription of the fifty thousand dollars, at a meeting at the court house, and the subscription of a like amount to another proposed road, the Quincy and Bloomington. He then entered into an active personal campaign to secure the money. The city voted it almost unanimously on October 15. Large subscriptions had been made in Tazewell County, Hancock County, Keokuk, and LaFayette, so that the total amount by December 14 was over a million dollars. ²

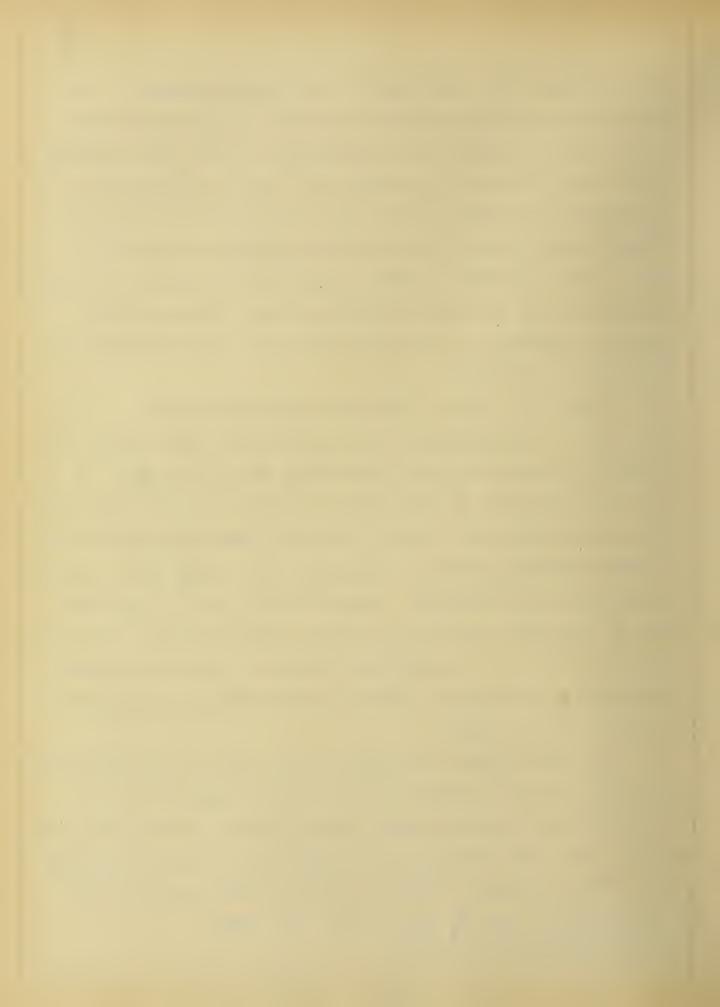
Despite all these efforts the road was not built. In March, 1854, it was announced that steps had been taken to let the contract of construction; but construction did not follow. In the winter and spring of 1855-6 more meetings were held in the towns along the proposed route, and Mr. Fell with others again circulated the ready subscription-list. But people were tiring of the subject, and there was little success. Again in 1857, when the panic had added to the usual chariness in giving to public interests, a futile attempt was made. At the November election, a proposal that the county should subscribe one hundred thousand dollars was defeated by a vote of 1570 to 1166.

The east-and-west road was not again actively advocated until 1866, when a number of Danville people began to push the project.

There were several groups, urging several routes, as usual, but those who proposed a road from Danville to Bloomington through Urbana and LeRoy were most active. Another projected route passed directly

¹⁾ Intelligencer, Aug. 3, Aug. 24, Sept. 12, 1853.

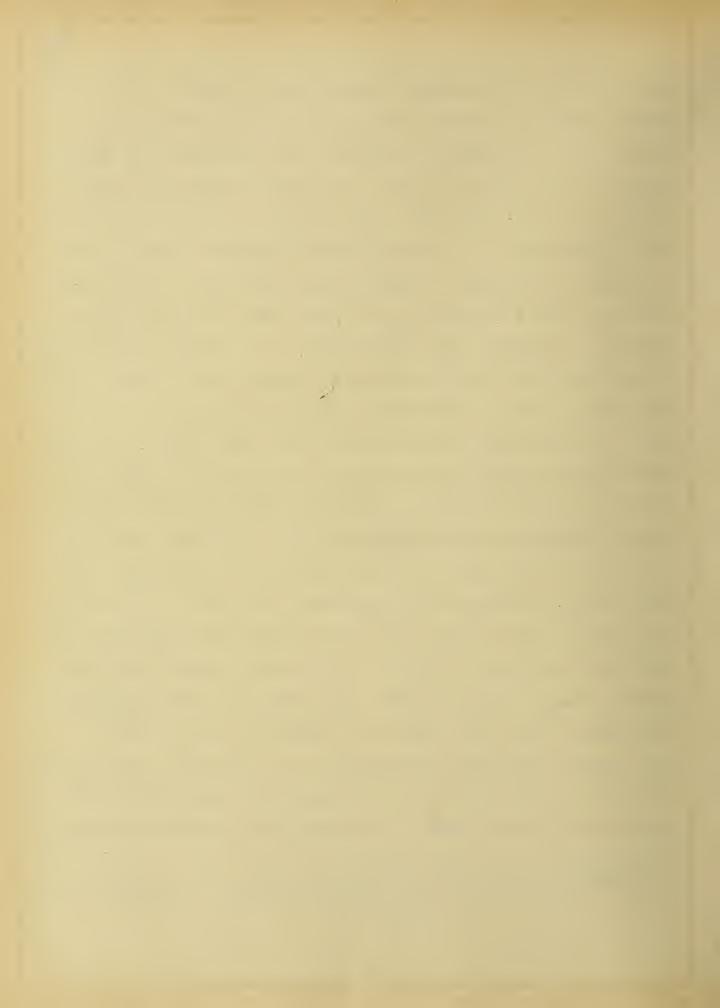
²⁾ Intelligencer, Dec. 14, 1853. 3) Pantagraph, March 15, 1854.



from Bloomington to LaFayette, through Cheney's Grove. The Tonica and Petersburg line of the Chicago and Alton was already partly constructed. A movement to deflect it to Bloomington was warmly espoused by Mr. Fell and others. He spoke in favor of it at a meeting on December 29, 1866, using a map - a favorite device - to show his meaning. 1 The resolutions he offered at the close of his speech were adopted. They endorsed the project of the road and constituted a committee to sound the community concerning a one hundred thousand dollar subscription. It proved very difficult to secure pledges, partly because many people believed that the road would come without it, and that the expenditure was therefore useless. An accusation was made against Fell and Grindley, touching their disinterestedness in the matter, to which Fell replied by publishing a letter from T. B. Blackstone, the president of the Chicago and Alton; and the canvas went on. President Blackstone convinced Mr. Fell that the new road would be built through Washington unless the money were subscribed. In April, he succeeded in securing a joint appropriation of seventy-five thousand dollars from the township and the city. In June the township voted one hundred thousand dollars each to the "LaFayette, Bloomington and Mississippi" and to the "Danville, Urbana and Pekin" roads.2 Then followed busy days in Bloomington, for there were three railroads being built. The one from Jacksonville was completed for traffic on August 14, 1867. The Danville road from Bloomington

¹⁾ Pantagraph, Dec. 29, 31, 1866. 2) Blackstone to Fell, Dec. 13, Dec. 28, 1866, Jan. 1, 1867.

³⁾ This road was leased to the Chicago and Alton on a 99-year lease in June, 1868. Lewis Life, 86.



to Pekin was completed late in 1869, and to Covington on September 2, 1870, giving railroad communication between Indianapolis and Peoria.

The other east-and-west road, of which General Gridley was president and Fell an active director, was less fortunate. Financial support was hard to find. Work began in spite of this in October, 1869. The contractors, Howard and Weston, had promised to finish the road to the Indiana line by January 1, 1871; but the company failed early in 1870. A new contract was let, but it was only partly fulfilled. The Wabash Company finally finished the road, which established regular service on July 13, 1872.

So at last, after efforts extending over twenty years, east-and-west communication by rail was secured. It was not in a form so direct as Mr. Fell and his colleagues had hoped to have it, but it has proved practicable and helpful.

The greater part of the Chicago and Alton shops was destroyed by fire on November 1, 1867. Almost at once, it was proposed to rebuild them in Chicago, or some other city where labor might more easily be had. The loss to Bloomington would have been very great, and Mr. Fell, with others, set himself to find the means of making their retention sure. Judge David Davis, General Grindley, and Mr. Fell induced R. E. Williams, the local attorney for the road, to go with them to Chicago for an interview with President Blackstone. The latter assured the trio that although feeling for removal was strong in the company, he himself favored the retention of the shops where they had been, if only additional land for needed extension could be secured. This reasonable re-



quest surprised the Bloomington men, who had expected to be asked for a bonus in money. Returning to Bloomington, the matter was presented to the people at a mass-meeting on November 26. General Gridley and Mr. Fell spoke, and the latter had, as usual, resolutions and a definite plan for raising the money. Many in the audience signed the guarantee that night, and within a few days the number reached 740. After much negotiation, the people agreed to give about thirty acres of land, some of which had to be gotten by condemnation proceedings. The railroad company advanced the money to pay for it, at ten per cent, the usual rate. Larger and better shops were shortly built, and their value to Bloomington correspondingly increased.

One other enterprise of a similar nature remains to be recorded. In 1867 a number of people took steps to build a street railway from Bloomington to Normal. Although some objected that the noise of cars would disturb the scholastic quiet of the community, people in general thought it a good idea. A company was incorporated, to which was given a franchise to build the railway through Bloomington, Normal, and the campus. It was operated at first by a dummy engine, later by horse and mule power. The cars

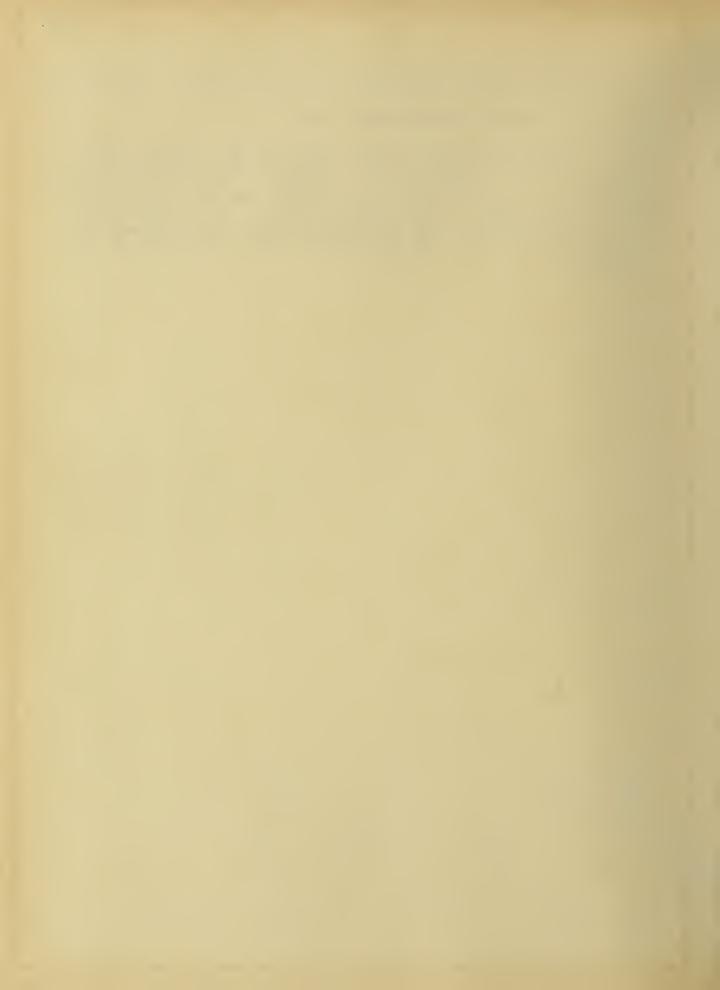
¹⁾ To raise the money required, the Bloomington constituency framed a bill authorizing an issue of bonds. It passed the General Assembly, but was vetoed by Governor Palmer on grounds of unconstitutionality. A committee from Bloomington visited Palmer, and after explaining the situation to him, received his promise not further to oppose the bill. They worked to secure a repassage, succeeding only after much lobbying in the senate. The bonds were paid duly, with no question of their validity.

2) P. G. Roots to Messrs. Hatch and Fell, May 23, 1867.



ran every forty minutes until nine o'clock at night. Asa H. Moore bought out the incorporators about 1870.

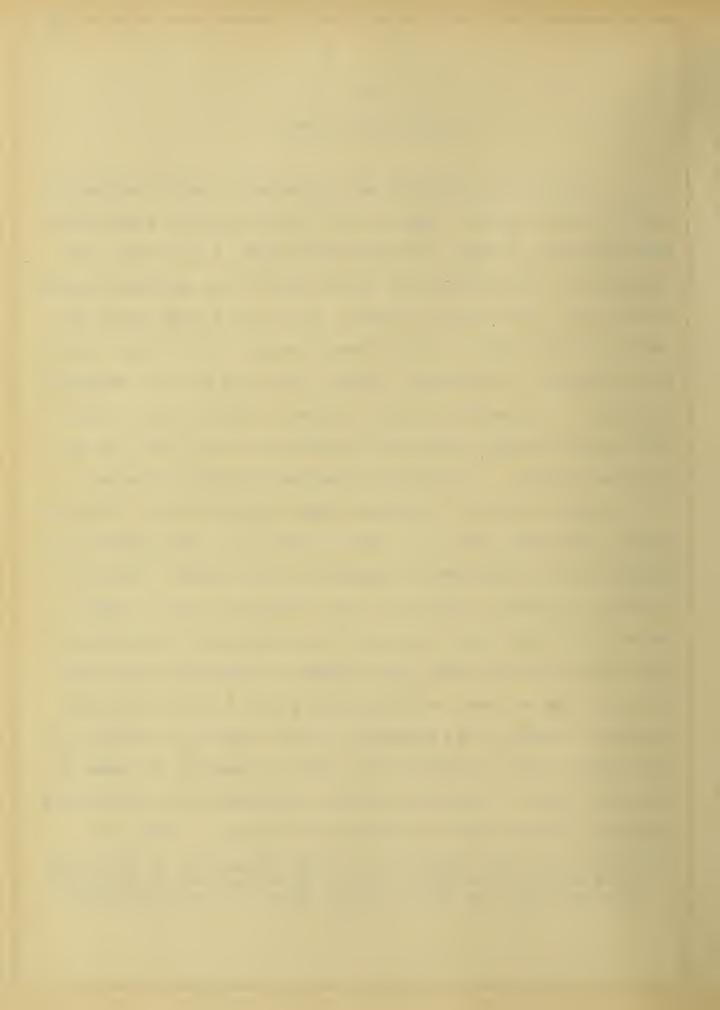
¹⁾ These incorporators were John L. Raut, Norval Dawson, Lyman Ferry, Walter T. Watkins, Owen T. Reeves, W. A. Pennell, C. G. Bradshaw, J. A. Wilson and R. H. Holder. They were authorized to organize when twenty thousand dollars had been subscribed and five per cent of that amount paid in. From notes from a manuscript history of the Bloomington and Normal railway by A. E. DeMange, based upon documents in the possession of the company.



The Religious Liberal.

The Unitarian movement had its parallel among the Quakers in the Hicksite schism, begun in 1827 by Elias Hicks, a brilliant and influential Friend. He denied the deity of Christ and the inspiration of the Scriptures, tenets held by the orthodox Friends. Rebecca Fell, the mother of Jesse W. Fell, was a warm friend and admirer of Elias Hicks, and followed him into the new sect which he established. The father, however, while he left the orthodox meeting at the same time, did not become a Hicksite, but united with the Methodists, whose creed agreed more nearly with his own personal belief. The father became an exhorter in his new church home, the mother a preacher among the Hicksites. mony of the family was in no wise disturbed, for both parents were tolerant and not disposed to exaggerate differences. But the children followed the mother in their religious faith. whose special privilege it was to drive his mother to meeting on First Days and Fourth Days, came closely to sympathize with her in her religious ideas; and his activity as a leader of liberal religious thought in his community in after years, may largely be attributed to the influence of his mother's teaching and example. She was a woman of vigorous mentality, although of but rudimentary education, as were most of the women of her time. With her

¹⁾ At this time, the simplicity of dress and manners of the Methodists was very like that of the Friends, and such a transition was easily made, entailing little change of accepted doctrine.

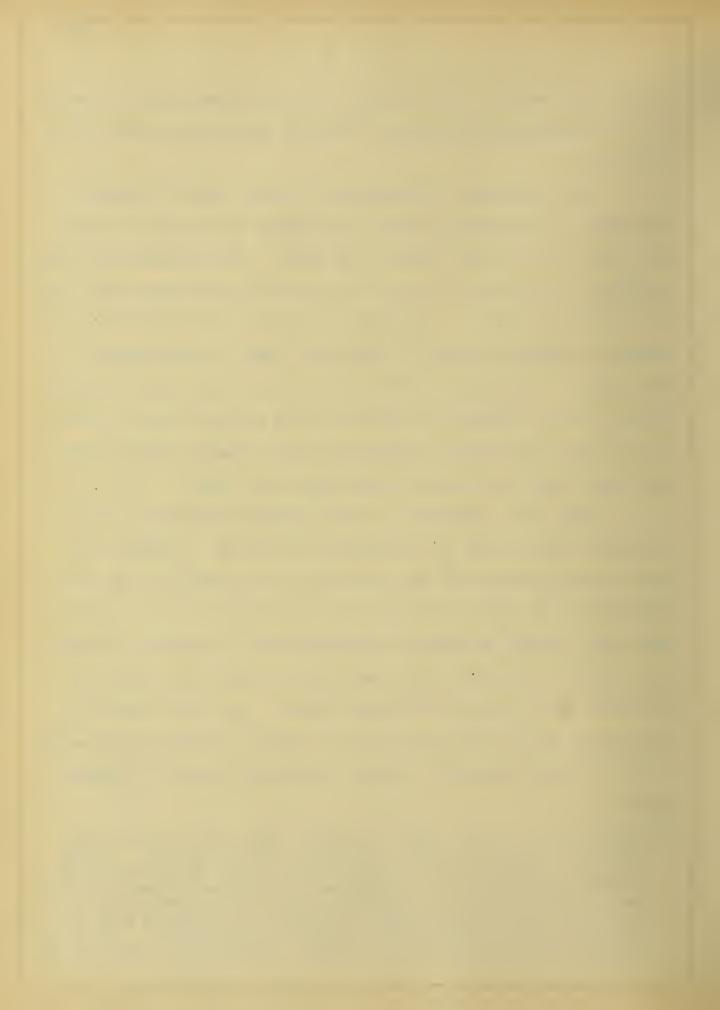


husband, she centered the training of her children about the necessity of uncompromising honesty, universal freedom, and fidelity to conviction.

After removing to Bloomington in 1837, the Fell family continued to hold meetings after the fashion of Friends, although there were few of their faith in the town. The meetings were held on Sunday afternoons at the house, and the attendance was often such as to crowd the rooms. John Magoun, beloved by everyone who knew him and an especial friend of the Fells, came to these Quaker gatherings. The elder Mrs. Fell's voice was often heard in exhortation, and her husband's, although he was totally blind, in song. In his youth Jesse Fell the elder had been a famous singer in his community, and in old age his voice was still sweet.

Under such influence, it was inevitable that Mr. Fell's religious faith should be both simple and strong. Wherever he was, at appropriate times and places he joined people of many denominations and shades of belief in their worship; and in all his life there appears no word of intolerance for the beliefs of others. His temporary connection with the Methodist Episcopal church at Payson has been mentioned on another page. Upon his return to Bloomington he did not unite with any church, although he attended the "West Charge" Methodist church, then under the care of James Shaw. 2

¹⁾ Rebecca Fell to Fell, Sept. 2, 1832. This letter shows the intensely religious nature of Jesse W. Fell's mother. It describes a camp-meeting in which she had taken part with great pleasure and profit, and expresses the tenderest wishes for his own spiritual welfare. One may easily infer from it the origin of Fell's religious ideas, although she expresses here an orthodoxy which her son did not share in later life. There is no hint of Unitarians in this letter, although Mrs. Fell was a



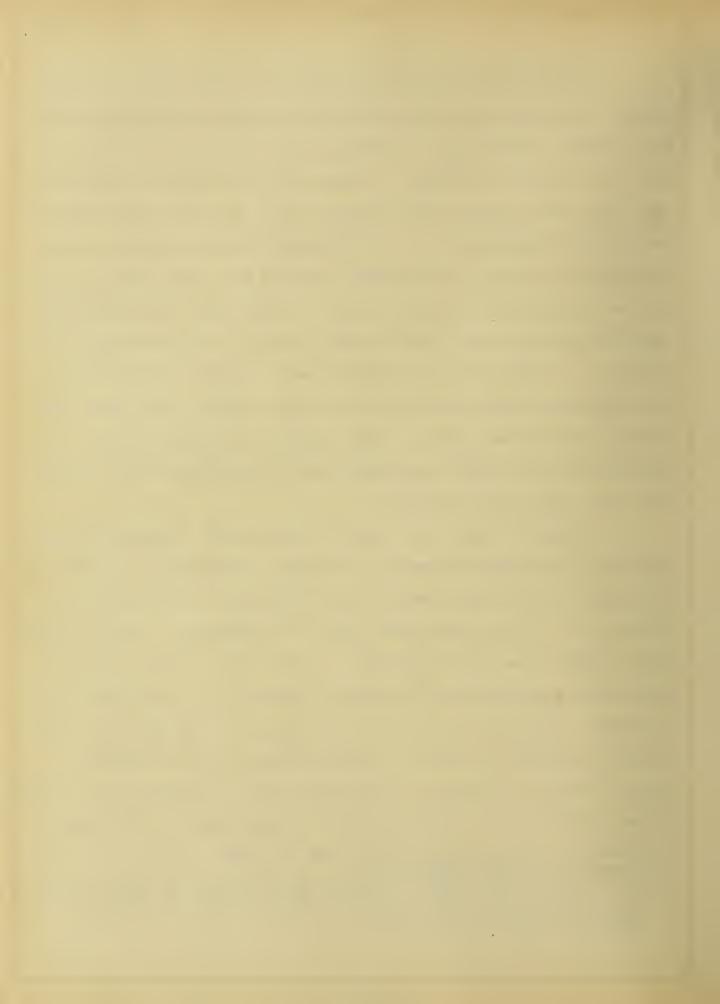
It is significant of the character of the people of Bloomington that there were in the town a great many of differing views but tolerant dispositions, who during the fifties were drawn together for purposes of worship. Westerners were usually affiliated, when they had religious affiliations at all, with the more radically evangelical denominations. In Bloomington there had been a Congregational church of abolitionist leanings for twenty years, and Baptist and Methodist churches which, although they contained many families from the South, were usually opposed to the extension of slavery. In 1855 the more radical element in the Presbyterian church had separated itself from the mother church, and formed the Second Presbyterian Church. Thus clearly, during the decade, the political and sectional prejudices held by people generally, affected their church affiliations.

On the evening of the tenth of July, 1859, a group of people who were interested in forming a religious organization to which Christians of differing creeds might belong, met in the office of Kersey Fell. There were about twenty in attendance. Eliel Barber was chairman, Jesse Fell secretary. The result of the conference was that the secretary was directed to write to Rev. Charles C. Ames, of Boston, asking him to come to Bloomington to look over the field. He came, preaching a series of eight sermons, and visiting the people who were interested in the possibility of forming a new church. He made his home with the Fells while in Bloomington, and became a

Hicksite. Jesse Fell to Fell, Jan. 6, 1835.

2) James Shaw in Fell Memorial, 4.

³⁾ Dr. John W. Cook: Address at the semicentennial of the founding of the Unitarian Church, in Bloomington, October 3, 1909, entitled "A Western Pioneer."



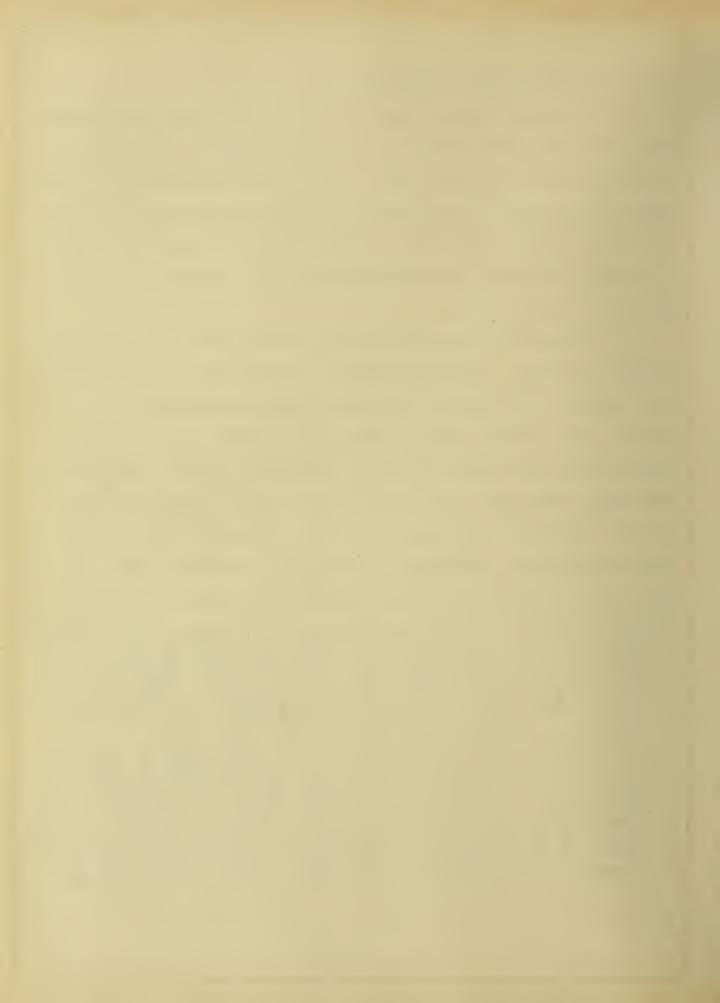
very dear friend to that housefold.1

A church, known at first as the Free Congregational Society, was organized on the seventh and eight of August. Every shade of Protestant belief was included. There were Universalists, Friends, Cambellites, Baptists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Spiritualists among the members. The resident clergymen of Bloomingtion were invited to preach for them until the pastor, Mr. Ames, could take up his work.

Phoenix Hall was used for the services of the new church for almost ten years. Here the pastors, for the most part New England men, nurtured anti-slavery sentiments and fostered devotion to the Union. Rev. Ichabod Codding, the fourth pastor, was a fearless abolitionist, and spoke boldly his progressive views. During his pastorate, which was, like those of the others, a short one, the society dedicated its house of worship, on March 15, 1868. Other pastors succeeded - free and fearless speakers and thinkers, for the most part, reformers rather than pastors, intellectual guides whose

¹⁾ Ames to Fell, July 15, 1859; Ames to E. M. Prince, Sept. 23, 1899; Vickers Fell to Fell, March 4, 1862; J. J. Lewis to Fell, March 2, 1862. It was Mr. Ames, a radical New England abolitionist, who preached the famous sermon known as "the funeral sermon of John Brown." It was delivered on Sunday, December 4, 1859, was printed in the local press, and afterward in apamphlet which had wide distribution. His personal estimate of Mr. Fell is given in the letter to Mr. Prince just cited. Lewis Life, 67.

²⁾ At a meeting held at the close of the regular morning service on the seventh of August, attended by about fifty people, Fell presented a set of resolutions looking toward the organization of the church. He and Kersey Fell, Mr. Phoenix, Mr. Stillwell and others talked, after which the resolutions were adopted. A large committee was appointed to report a plan of organization the next evening. Thirty-two people entered the society that night, twenty more on August 14. Dr. John W. Cook, A Western Pioneer.



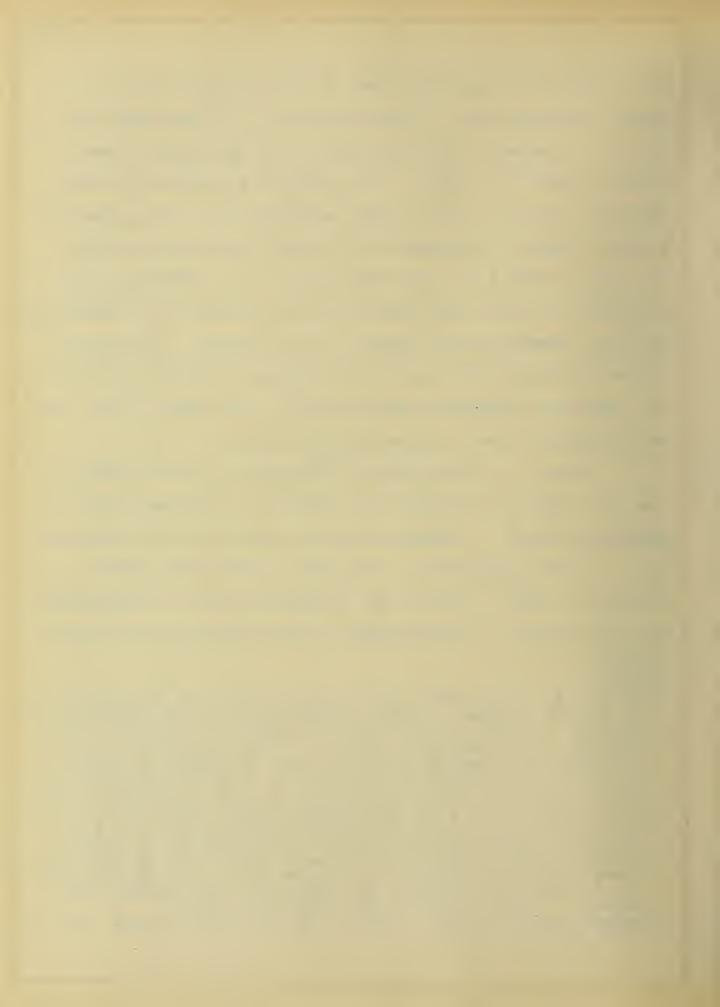
brief stay in the community servel to waken thought if not to deepen religious faith. Two of them, Rev. C. C. Burleigh and Rev. J. F. Thompson, a New Englander and an Englishman, became strong friends of Mr. Fell. Mr. Burleigh, a friend of the poet Whittier, was a quiet man of great spiritual force, but a man who gained no degree of popularity in the hustling western town in which his lot was for a short time cast. Mr. Thompson, who followed him, on the other hand, was most acceptable in Bloomington, and later became immensely popular in Los Angeles. In speaking of the friendships which came to Fell through his church relations, it is meet here to mention Robert Collier, with whom he often consulted and who became a valued personal friend.2

During the years since its founding the church gradually lost its composite congregational character, and became more honogenious in belief. Unitarian doctrines came to be the prevailing opinion of the congregation. The name was therefore changed, on December 9, 1885, to that of the "Unitarian Church of Bloomington." Mr. Fell remained an active member of this organization so long as he lived.

2) Robert Collier to Fell, July 2, Sept. 18, Nov. 8, 1866; June 7,

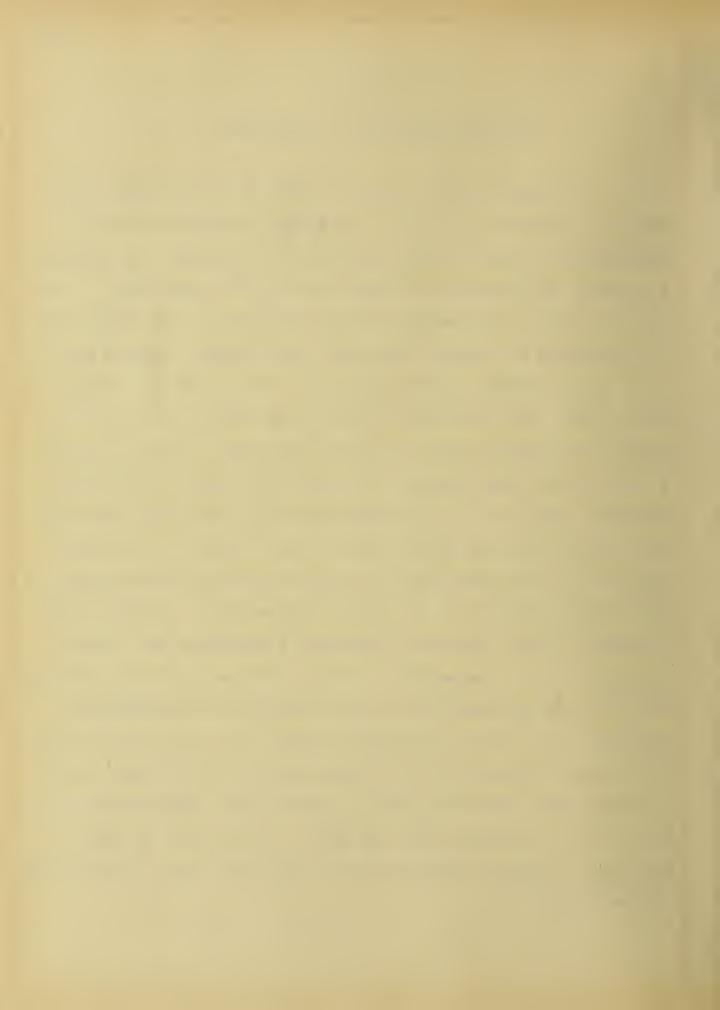
1870; Sept. 15, 1873.

^{1) &}quot;Give him," wrote Robert Collier to Fell in 1873, in introducing an English clergyman who was viewing the sights of American, "if you can, a chance to meet Charles Burleigh. He may not otherwise see one of the Old Ironsides." Rev. Burleigh had preached in Pennsylvania many years before upon the subject of slavery, and the Fells had known of him then." ... last third-day evening we all (a few excepted) repaired to the Meeting-house where we heard a very interesting and eloquest speech delivered by Charles Burleigh on the subject of immediate emancipation. he is employed by the anti-slavery society of Philadelphia to deliver lectures on that subject; he is the most profound reasoner I ever heard. And if dignity of manners, eloquence, and sound reason can do anything to promote the cause he is well adpted to the office." Rebecca Fell to Fell, Christmas, 1836.



The Davis Campaign. (1868-1872).

The Congressional campaign of 1868 in Illinois was one of especial interest to Mr. Fell. In March, an editorial in the Pantagraph had again proposed his name as a candidate for Congress, a proposal which received the usual short shrift from him. 1 public request was repeated, and again declined. The Republicans of Bloomington and McLean County then asked General Giles A Smith to be their candidate, and he accepted. Fell, however, thought this a false and foolish move, inasmuch as Shelby M. Cullom, the member then sitting, was a tried and proved man. There followed a lively controversy between the Cullom-Fell party and the Smith adherents, waged both in the newspapers and in all public and private places where Republicans gathered for council. The county committee called a mass-meeting for the purpose of selecting and instructing delegates to the district convention. It met on the eleventh of April, but was so tumultous a gathering that little business could be transacted. General Smith seems to have had control of the party machinery, but the machine was so powerfully opposed by Fell and his colleague Gridley, that none of the routine business decided upon could be forced through. A delegate county convention was therefore called, to meet on the twenty-seventh; and the war went on between Fell and Smith. The friends of Smith published a vigorous attack entitled "The Other Side," to which Fell 1) Lewis Life, 92.

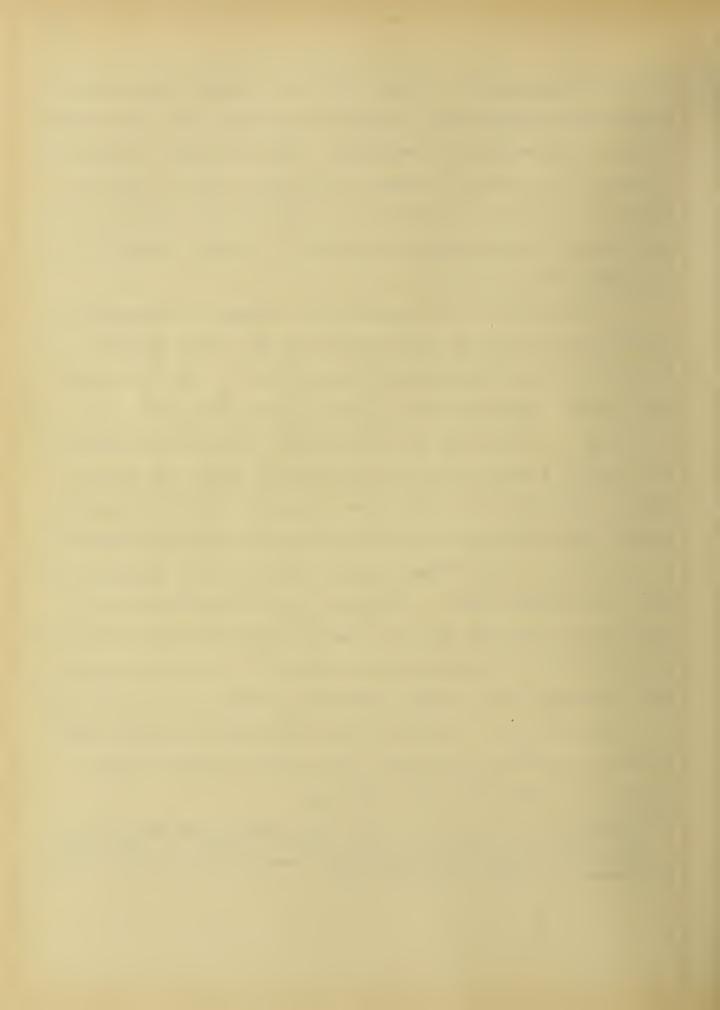


replied as vigorously. When it met, the second county convention proved more tractable than the previous one had been, and nominated General Smith as McLean's candidate. Fell continued his exertions throughout the district, however, and on the fourth of May the friends of Cullom were gratified by a vote of five counties to two in his favor, at the district convention. He was elected by a large majority in November.

The story of this congressional struggle in McLean County illustrates a condition of division which was rather typical of the situation of the Republican party in Illinois. The unity which only a great common purpose could give, had passed away at the close of the war. Discontent with the extreme congressional reconstruction policy, although not then so decided as later, had begun to appear; Johnson's foolish blunders had complicated the situation. Locally, many men aspired to the honors which the Republicans had to distribute. The struggle for the nomination to the governorship was unusually sharp. Ingersoll, who had expected to be a candidate for attorney general, upon the report of the withdrawal of Palmer decided to try for the governorship. In the convention he lost the nomination to Palmer, however, as did Jesse K. Dubois and S. W. Moulton also. Governor Palmer's advocacy of states rights divided the party to some extent, and finally resulted in his leaving it in 1872, with some adherents.

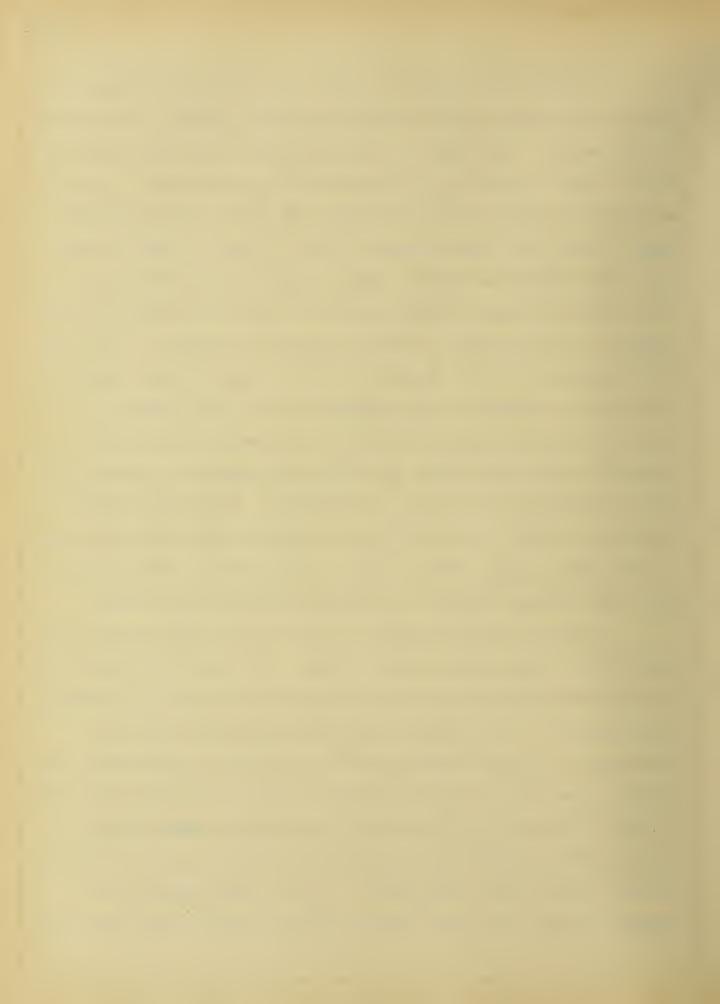
2) Ingersoll to Fell, March 25, 1868.

¹⁾ Pantagraph, April 9, 10, 11 for the notice of the mass convention; April 11, article by Fell answering attack in "The Other Side;" other interesting matter in issues of March 25-30, 1868.



In 1870 there occurred a bitter quarrel between Shelby M. Cullom and Mr. Fell, which resulted in Cullom's defeat in his race for reelection. The cause of the difference was Cullom's appointment of John F. Scibird to be postmaster of Bloomington. be remembered that the firm of Scibird and Waters sold the Pantagraph to Davis and Fell in August, 1868. Scarcely was the sale made, when Scibird and Waters began to plan the publication of a rival Republican paper, which resulted in the establishment of the Leader, the first number of which appeared in December. Fell and Davis regarded this as a breach of faith in their rivals, inasmuch as they had purchased the Pantagraph with the understanding that they were buying the Republican paper of Bloomington; and the two newspapers soon worked up as spirited and pugnacious a rivalry as usually developes under such circumstances. It was very natural, therefore, for Fell and his friends to oppose Scibird's appointment to the postmastership, even if other considerations had not given him a much stronger reason for resenting Cullom's appointment.

General Gridley had had his price for the assistance he had given Fell in supporting Cullom in 1868. This was Fell's influence in favor of the retention of Gridley's brother-in-law, Dr. Cromwell, as postmaster. Dr. Cromwell was a good postmaster, but his appointment by Andrew Johnson was with difficulty confirmed by the senate, as were many other appointments by that unpopular president. Mr. Fell, seeing no good reason for opposing his reappointment, urged it upon Cullom, and received what Fell understood to be his promise that he would retain him. But for some reason Cullom changed his mind, and after Grant's election Scibird was given the

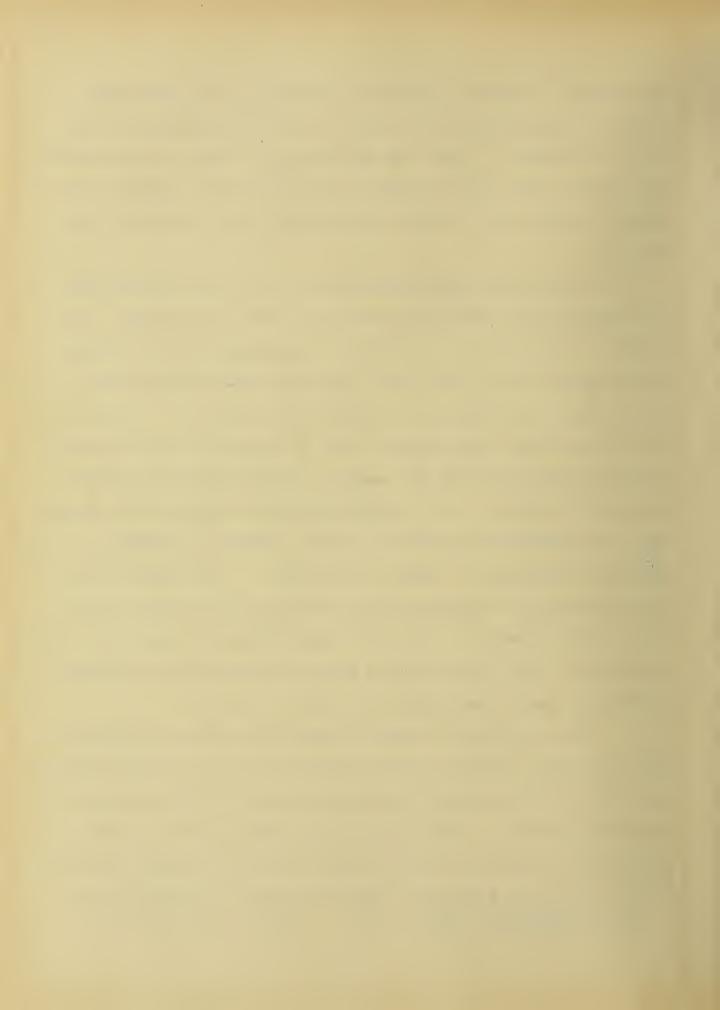


appointment. Added to this was the fact that Fell had urged Cullom's renomination in 1868 with the understanding that he was not to run again. These considerations put Fell in the position of a man who must either vindicate his own honor or impeach that of others, and he took a course calculated to clear himself of suspicion.

Cullom repeatedly acknowledged at the time that he owed his nomination in 1868 to the efforts of Fell and Gridley. The equally vigorous opposition which the Pantagraph and its guiding spirit exercized two years later, made his prospects hopeless in McLean County, and doubtful throughout the district. McLean declared for General John McNulta, but the district, after a bitter struggle lasting through the summer, nominated Colonel Jonathan Merriam of Tazewell. Mr. Merriam, although a man of fine character, was comparatively unknown, and was defeated in November by the Democratic candidate, James C. Robinson. The fact that the division among the Republicans had resulted in Republican defeat did not tend promptly to heal the wounds among the factions. Nevertheless, Fell and Cullom found a way of adjusting their personal differences, and became again the best of friends.

The four years of Grant's first administration aroused as much criticism, perhaps, in his own state as in any other, despite the fact that his informal and unadvised ways of doing things were distinctly western. There was in Illinois a southern element so strong, that although it had not made the state disloyal during the

¹⁾ Mr. Fell's own account of the controversy to that date is in the <u>Pantagraph</u> of July 22, 1870. Shelby M. Cullom to the writer, March 15, 1912.



great struggle, it still felt much sympathy for the subdued states, subjected to the indignities of military and carpet-bag rule.

Summer, to whom Grant had behaved with what most people considered inexcusable injustice, was nowhere more beloved than in the Middle West, where he had long been a popular hero. The best men everywhere were dissatisfied with the position of the party leaders upon the civil service question.

Carl Shurz was the guiding spirit of the Liberal Republican movement of 1872, and its strongest adherents were in those states where his influence, and that of his friends, was strong. His election to the senate in 1869 was the first sign of the triumph of his milder views over the blind vindictiveness of the older school of Republicans. Tariff-reform Republicans joined hands with the reconstruction-reform men, but as tariff-reform men were comparatively few in most of the states where the insurgents hoped to gain a following, this issue was kept in the background. The passage of the Ku-Klux bill in 1871 was so actively opposed by Shurz and Trumbull as to cause these two leaders to draw together and to gather around them the more liberal elements in the party; and this group was further unified by the New York custom house affair. Nevertheless, as late as in December of 1871 neither Trumbull nor Shurz had openly planned to oppose Grant's reëlection.

Early in January the movement, which as yet had appeared only as a division in Congress, began to take on a more popular aspect. In Missouri and in southern Illinois, where the southern

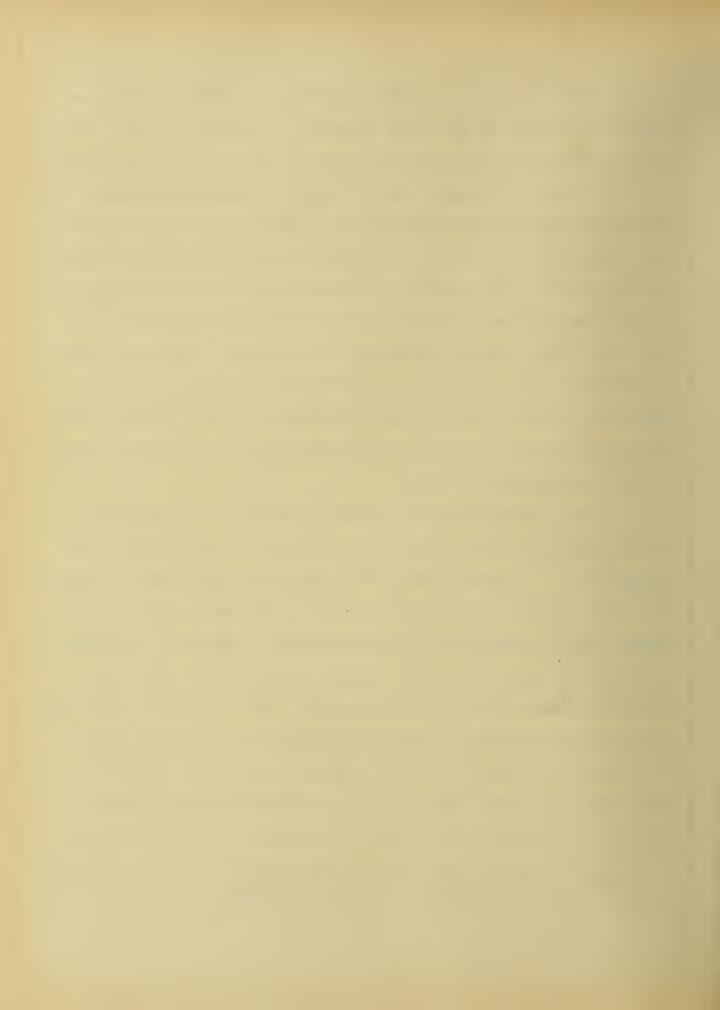
¹⁾ Horace White, Life of Lyman Trumbull, 269-271, quoting an interview published in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Dec. 3, 1871, and New York Times, Dec. 6. A letter of Trumbull to W. C. Flagg, in the Flagg MSS, dated Jan. 10, 1872, however, shows that at



element was strong, there was a great deal of feeling among the people in support of Shurz and Trumbull and Sumner. The Liberal Republicans held a convention in January, and issued a call for a national mass convention in May. Pre-convention speculation as to the presidential candidate of this seceding Republican gathering centered at that time about two men, Lyman Trumbull and Charles Francis Adams. The people of the southern third of Illinois, as well as many throughout the state who remembered Trumbull's service, were very hopeful concerning his chances. Governor Palmer and the influential Jesse K. Dubois were his leading supporters. Adams was probably better known in the nation than Trumbull, and had proved his ability in the difficult position of Minister to England during the Civil War.

Just when Trumbull's prospects were looking brightest,
Judge David Davis decided that he would be a candidate for the
nomination. Leonard Swett, the famous criminal lawyer, long an
associate and close personal friend of Judge Davis, became his
manager, and enlisted the services of Fell in arousing the people
of McLean County and central Illinois to support a citizen of
their own community for the nomination. Fell, from the first an
advocate of a milder reconstruction policy and for that reason
thoroughly in sympathy with the Liberals, had been a Trumbull
adherent until Davis formed his ill-advised decision, when he
changed to Davis through a spirit of loyalty to an old and dear

that date Trumbull was contemplating open opposition to Grant, in the Republican party. Flagg was Trumbull's only confidant at this time, according to his own statement.



friend. 1 By the first of April, then, he was being consulted as to the plans for the Davis campaign at Cincinnati. Swett, ingenious and indefatigable, estimated the strength of the Trumbull faction, and proposed that to counteract it a train load of Davis supporters should go to Cincinnati, that they might influence the nomination there as the Illinois delegations had in 1860. McLean, Tazewell, Livingston, Logan, DeWitt, Champaign, Ford, Iroquois and Vermillion counties were strongly in favor of Davis, and from these counties Swett drew the delegations upon which he mainly depended. 2 Peoria County, and especially the German population

2) Swett to Fell, April 1, 1872.

¹⁾ Fell to Lyman Trumbull, March 4, April 11, 1872. (Trumbull MSS, Library of Congress.) Trumbull to Fell, March 9, 1872. Mr. Fell's sympathy for the once oppressed black man did not blind him to the shame of the existing oppression of white men in the A letter to James G. Blaine, written March 3, 1885, but evidently never sent, shows plainly his ideas upon the sub-It contains also some entertaining comments, in very characteristic style. After referring to the failure of Republican reconstruction, he says: "Unfortunately the Democracy of this county neither learns nor forgets much, and without outside aid, I have slender hopes in that direction." He thinks reform must come through some liberal leader. possibly you may know, I was quite intimately acquainted with Abm. Lincoln, & in a feeble way did something in 1858, 9 and 60 in bringing him before the people as a presidential candidate. In the enclosed I have ventured to say what were some of his views touching the matter in hand - reconstruction. lived doubtless they would have been modified. ... Whilst you are not where many of us would have you, are you not in a position in which you can be almost as influential? Your 2nd vol., in which you will discuss this very question, is yet to be published. Why not give this matter your patient, very best thought?"

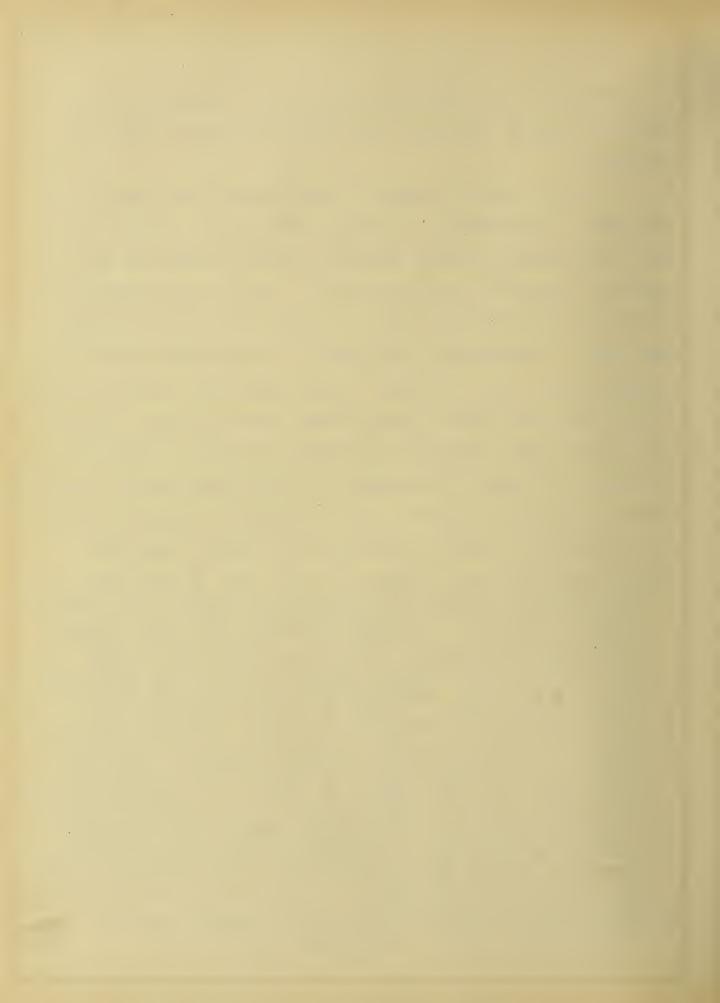


(the strength of the Republican party there), according to the opinion of Robert Ingersoll, would accept any man who might be nominated.

the home of Horace White, in Chicago, and agreed to issue a call for the Cincinnati meeting, signed by as many influential men as might be induced to join the movement. As this followed the one already issued by Missouri (and was copied from the one issued in New York), it was called a "Response". It appeared first in the Chicago Times, April 17, 1872. Thirty-eight men, including Gustav Keerner and Horace White, Dubois, Miner, Jayne, and Fell, signed the call as first published, and within a few days a longer list, composed of the names of hundreds of Illinois Republicans, appeared? Palmer, at first inclined to favor the Regulars, decided in March to espouse the new cause, and declined the regular Republican

Chicago Times, April 17; Pantagraph, April 19, 20.

¹⁾ The letter from Robert Ingersoll to Mr. Fell, dated Peoria, April 6, 1872, expressed with remarkable frankness that would-be statesman's disgruntled resentment at his rejection by the people of Illinois. "You must not expect me to make a speech at Cincinnati, " he says, "I am done. I can conceive of no circumstances under which I would make a political speech. ever in this world a man was thoroughly sick of political speaking, I am that man. Understand me, I am an admirer and a friend of Judge Davis. I want to see him president of the United States, and I believe he will be. And what little I do will be done for him. I am going to take no active part for For some reason, the leaders in politics are not my friends, and never have been. My only ambition is to get a living and to take good care of my family. The American people have lost the power to confer honor ... Leonard Swett wrote me upon the subject of going to Cincinnati. I wrote him that I was sick of politics. By the way, if his letter had been about one tenth as long, it would have been infinitely better. His letter is good; but too much of it. All his points could have been made in one column. A letter never should be so long as to require an index." 2) White to Fell, April 10, 1872; Fell to Trumbull, April 8;



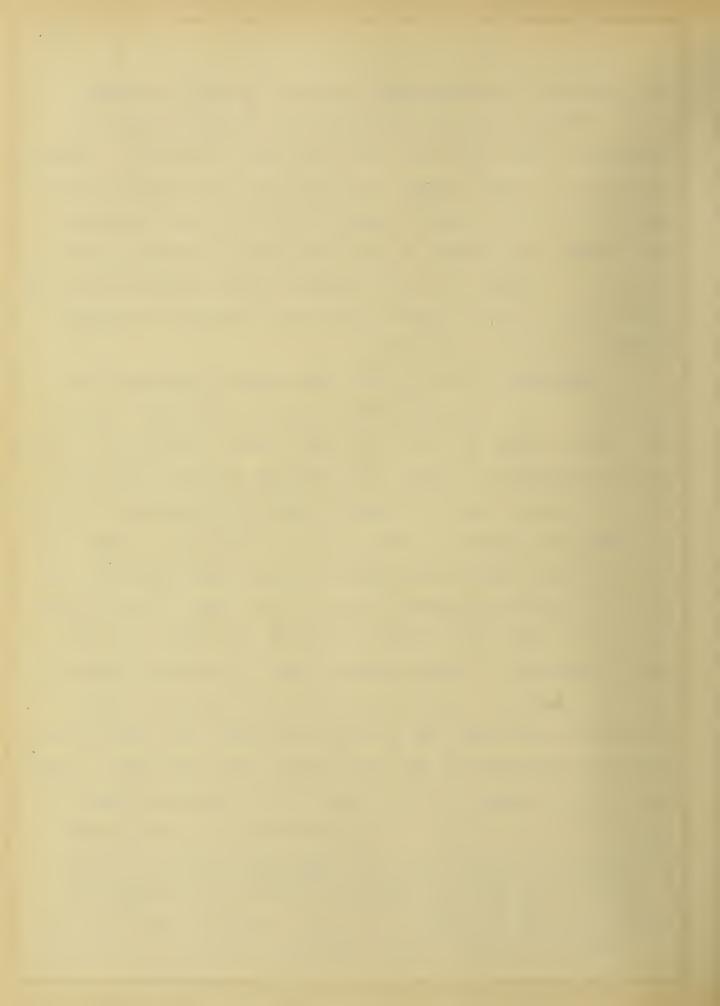
nomination for the governorship, which was accepted by Oglesby.1

Trumbull kept Fell informed of the trend of affairs in Washington, while Fell wrote him of the local situation. Trumbull would give no formal consent to the use of his name before the convention until late in April, apparently with an unselfish desire not to hamper the success of the reform wave by introducing personal factions. Indeed, he tried to impose on other leaders an entirely impracticable policy of entire silence with regard to candidates, until the meeting at Cincinnati.

Meantime, the Davis group were vigorously pushing their candidate in the only region where he could command much support; for, being a jurist and not a political leader, and being but little known throughout the country, his strongest claim to recognition lay in his having been the personal friend and appointee of Lincoln - a claim that amounted to little except in Illinois. Since men with even less fame have succeeded in winning nominations from the lottery of convention chances, Swett and Fell had firm hopes that with a good delegation of local supporters they might carry the day at Cincinnati. The Democrats, strong in Illinois, were rallying to his support. Among these was Adlai Stevenson, a man of considerable influence, and a neighbor of Judge Davis, who with his adherents formed part of the Davis party at the convention. Swett was a skilful manager, and by convention time had gained half the Illinois forces for Davis. The Labor Reform party had already

¹⁾ Carlinville Democrat, April 17; Pantagraph, April 18. On the twenty-third, Palmer delivered a very influential anti-Grant speech at Springfield, which served greatly to strengthen the forces of the Liberals.

²⁾ Fell to Trumbull, April 8, 11, 1872. (Trumbull MSS, Library of Congress.); Trumbull to Fell, April 11, 16, 1872. Trumbull's



nominated him for president in February. 1

Returning from a tree-planting expedition to his Iowa lands just before the convention, Fell preceded by a few days the delegation which started from Bloomington at five o'clock on April 29. Judge Davis' generosity in providing facilities for the attendance of his supporters made the following a large one; contemporary accounts say it was also a very noisy and confident one. About five hundred and fifty men from Bloomington and vicinity went to Cincinnati; the entire Illinois contingent numbered over a thousand. 2

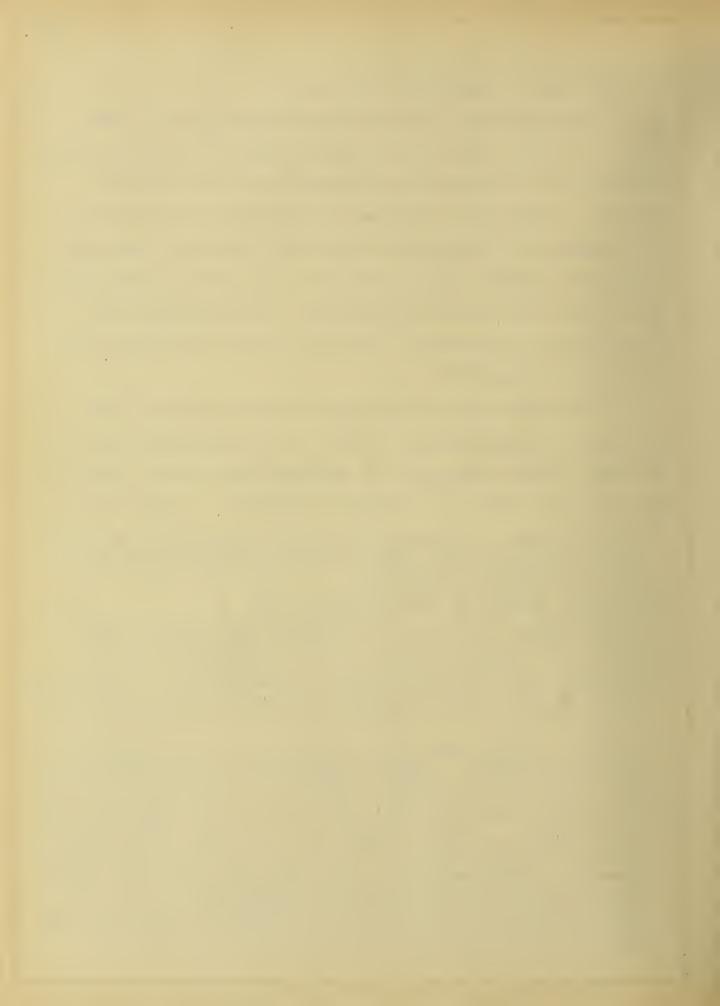
The Davis forces, ensconcing themselves early at headquarters and marshalling their forces in well-organized companies that gave a strong impression of confidence and success, seemed to lead all others before the convention opened.3 There was an

letter of April 11 spoke of the Cooper Union meeting, at which Trumbull and Shurz both spoke to immense audience, and said that the movement had attained such proportions that no one faction could then control it.

¹⁾ Stanwood, <u>History of the Presidency</u>, 336. 2) <u>Pantagraph</u>, April 30. The <u>Pantagraph</u> itself did not go over to the Liberals, although it did not actively oppose Judge Davis. See issues of April 10, 13, 17, 19, 27, etc.

^{3) &}quot;It is obvious that the Davis crowd is the calmest, the most confident, and the best organized and disciplined. They pitched their tents the earliest, and have worked up in detail all the strong points of their randidate and all the weak points of his rivals.

[&]quot;It is claimed that Davis is the only man in the crowd who is personally popular. Adams is aristocratic, Brown belongs to the 'hurrah' school, but has few warm friends; Trumbull is cold as a fish; Cox is phlegmatic and Greeley is pudgy and eccentric. 'But Davis,' says Jesse Fell, 'is a man who is beloved by those who know him. I have known him personally and intimately for thirty years, as I knew Lincoln, and he is just such an honest, faithful, straight-forward, incorruptible man; and he possesses the same personal magnetism. He would give us the same enthusiastic campaign and the same overwhelming victory. those who were Old Abe's associates before 1860 are now asking Davis' nomination. He now lives in Central Illinois, and has made two million dollars in fair dealing, and he hasn't an

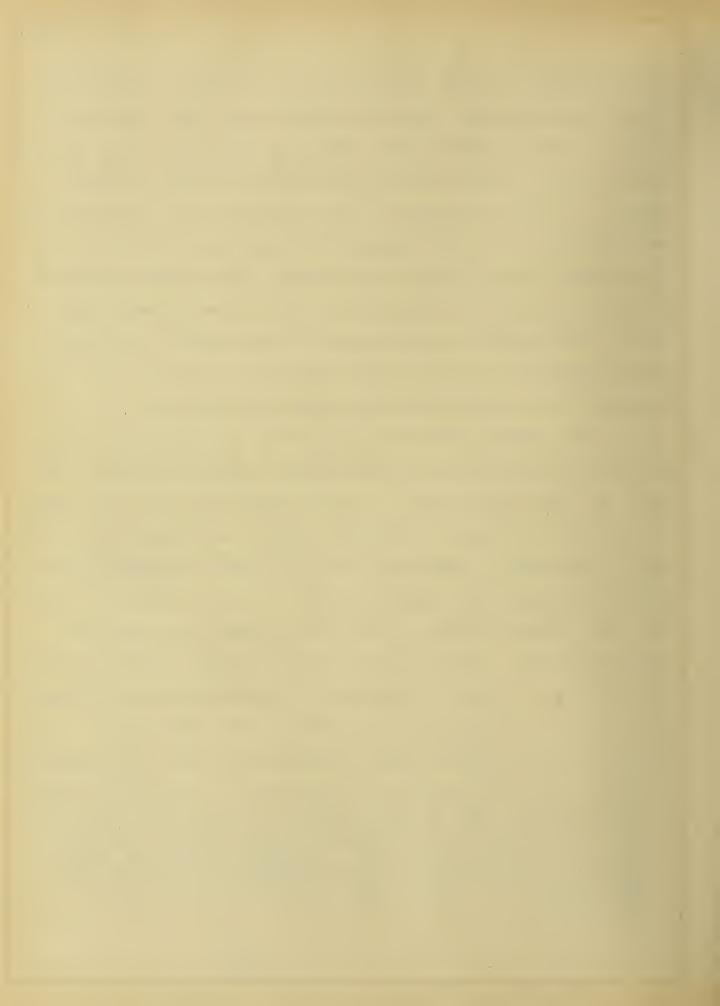


understanding - in which it is natural to suspect the old combination of Lewis and Fell - that Davis should have first place, and Governor Curtin of Pennsylvania second; an arrangement which Curtin's own ambition to be the presidential candidate brought to naught.

Adams, by far the most able and best prepared of all the candidates was unpopular in the West because of the very qualities which made his strength - his distinguished ancestry, his long and successful diplomatic service, his thorough education and statesmanly qualities. His opponents reviled him as an "aristocrat"; to which his friends answered by inquiring with asperity if it were in the Constitution that the president had to come from Illinois?

The "hordes" from that state had but a fictitious strength, for they were divided into three factions, supporting Palmer, Trumbull, and Davis respectively. On the twenty-ninth there was waged an all-day first among the Illinois leaders, who could arrive at no kind of agreement. Swett and Fell found themselves pitted against White and Bryant, the Trumbull managers. On the thirtieth - Tuesday - the leaders decided to divide the Illinois vote among the three candidates. They called a meeting at three o'clock in Greenwood Hall. Dr. Jayne of Springfield, a Trumbull supporter, issued the call, Fell presided, and the secretary was a Palmer man. About a thousand Illinoisans attended the meeting, and came to an agreement

enemy in all that region, nor in the world. The last two times he was elected Judge without a single dissenting vote from either party.['] This is the way his friends talk; and Fell is one of the sincerest of men, and his moderation gives weight to his words. Davis seems ahead at this hour. Curtin is to get the second place, in consideration of giving Pennsylvania's vote to Davis for the first.'" Chicago Post of April 28, quoted in the Pantagraph.



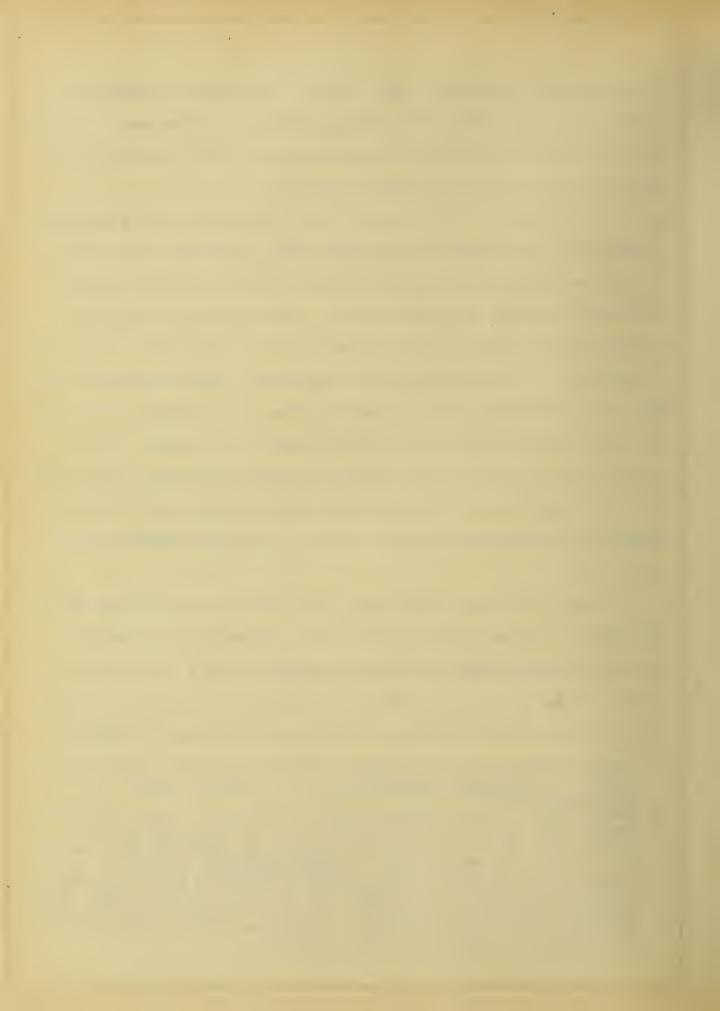
concerning the division of the votes. There was a street procession for Davis after the meeting, and great enthusiasm. In the evening an adjourned meeting was addressed by John Wentworth and John Hickman, the latter from Pennsylvania.

In spite of all these well-laid plans Davis was foredoomed to failure, the leaders in the party being uncertain both of his ability to attract the popular vote and of his interest in the particular reforms they advocated. Starting with a vote of ninety-one and a half, he lost steadily, retaining only six in the final ballot. His supporters were scarcely less disappointed than was Schurz at the failure to nominate Adams or Trumbull, both men far more likely to carry the Liberal banner to victory. The "Gratz Brown trick" by which Greeley won the nomination, in spite of his eccentricities, his extreme views, and the lack of confidence of his colleagues, seemed to stun the party leaders everywhere.

Governor Palmer was among the first to recover from the shock and to shape a definite program. Assuming that despite personal disappointment the Davis supporters would rally to the ticket, he wrote to Fell asking for a survey of the field in his county and estimates of Liberal strength, and asking his support

¹⁾ Twenty-one were to go to Davis, eleven to Trumbull, and ten to Palmer. <u>Cincinnati Commercial</u>, May 1; <u>Chicago Times</u>, May 1; <u>Pantagraph</u>, May 2.

²⁾ Horace White attributes the failure of Davis to "the editorial fraternity, who, at a dinner at Murat Halstead's house, resolved that they would not support him if nominated, and caused that fact to be made known." Lyman Trumbull, 380-381. A letter from one of the McLean County delegates to the Pantagraph of May 3 says that "It is believed, and is doubtless true, that Belmont's visit here resulted in buying every Cincinnati paper as well as those of Louisville, to oppose Davis at all hazards." This letter is dated 1:30 F.M., Thursday.



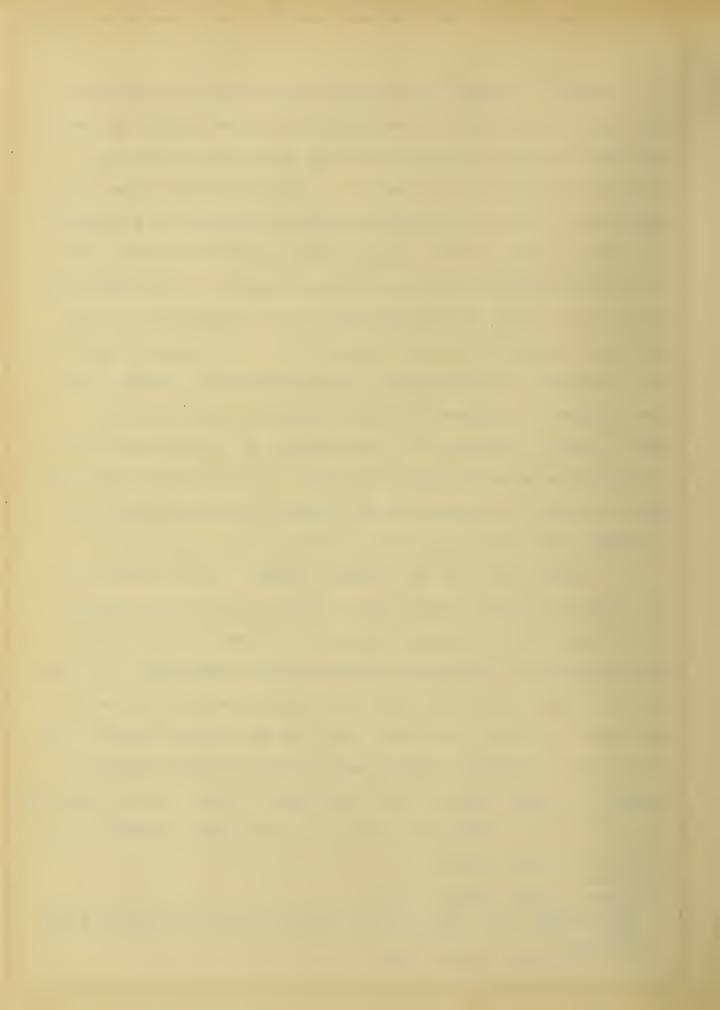
for Greeley. Palmer was personally much attached to Greeley, who had befriended him in the Tribune the winter before, and was therefore the more willing to urge the disgruntled into self-forgetting efforts for the cause. A state convention was to be arranged for, and strong efforts would be necessary to popularize the erratic editor of the Tribune, against whom the Middle West still remembered his harsh criticism of Lincoln. With Adlai Stevenson, the leader of the Democrates, Fell arranged for a massmeeting to ratify the Greeley nomination. This was held on May 12. Fell presented the ratification resolutions with a speech, which was followed by speeches by Adlai Stevenson, General Gridley, Major Sterlein (speaking for the Germans), Dr. Rogers and others. A letter from Governor Palmer was read. By the end of the meeting it is fair to assume that the leaders themselves were almost persuaded that they wanted Horace Greeley to be president.

Horace White, of the Chicago Tribune, who had been among the stanchest of the Trumbull men, entered the Greeley campaign, as did many others, through loyalty to a cause which he did not feel justified in abandoning because of poor leadership. He wrote to Mr. Fell in late May, to tell him that it had been agreed at the state convention (which Mr. Fell did not attend) that he - Fell - was to be the member from Illinois on the national executive committee. This place Mr. Fell declined to take, feeling doubtless that he could not effectively serve a man of whose fitness for the presidency he was not sure.³

¹⁾ Palmer to Fell, May 8, 1872.

²⁾ Pantagraph, May 7, for Fell's declaration in favor of Greeley; May 9, call for a ratification meeting; May 13, account of the meeting.

³⁾ White to Fell, May 28, 1872.



Nevertheless his personal relations with Greeley during the summer and autumn of 1872 continued to be friendly, and while in New York late in November, after the election was over, he was granted one of the last interviews which that sadly disappointed man could have given to any of his friends. Fell himself gradually withdrew from active participation in politics after the disappointment of the Cincinnati meeting, feeling that the day of his service in that way was past.

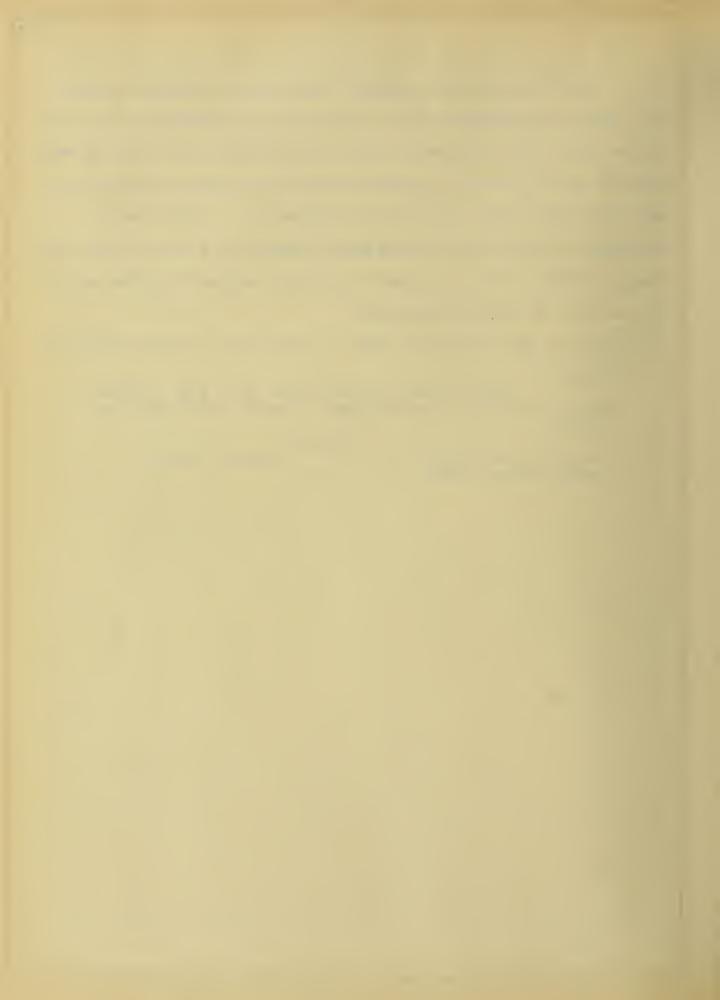
1) Greeley to Fell, Nov. 23, 1872. The letter is very characteristic:

Dear Sir:

Call at the Tribune Office at 4 P.M. (Sunday,) second door on the south side. Knock and it shall be opened.

Yours,

Mr. Fell, of Illinois, Astor House, city. Horace Greeley.



XI

The Tree Planter

"The earth was clas in the greenery of trees wherever he walked." - John W. Cook.

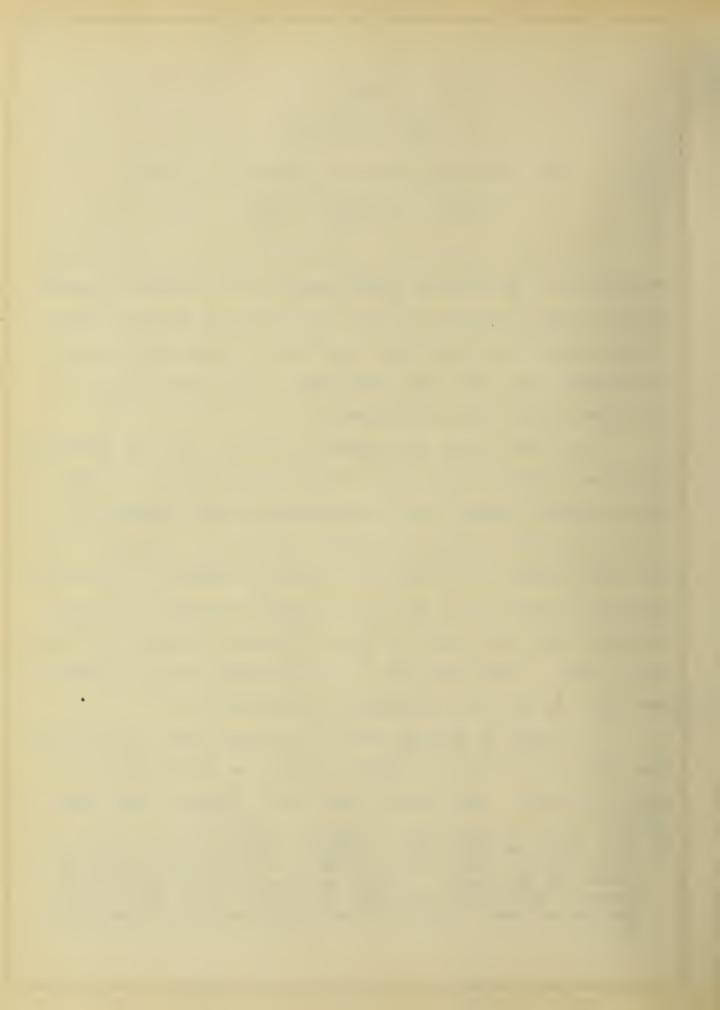
It was G. A. Sewall who, when the etherialized earthiness of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' <u>Gates Ajar</u> had set everyone to discussing his idea of heaven, replied to a young woman who had asked him if he thought there were trees in heaven: "I really don't know, but if Jesse Fell gets there and finds none, he will hunt around and find some somewhere and plant them."

The remark shows the extent to which Mr. Fell was associated with tree-planting in the minds of those who knew him. It was his great passion, perhaps more than anything else his lifework, to set trees in the bare prairie and watch them make of it a garden. From his first months in the new land, when the bleakness of its prairie struck his eyes, used to the rolling wooded stretches of Pennsylvania and Ohio, with especial force, he looked forward to the planting of trees. That there were no trees except along the streams, was, for him, the one disadvantage of the prairie.2

Therefore he planted trees in the towns where he owned land.

The streets of Lexington, Clinton, Pontiac, he lined with rows of maples and elms. Wherever he held a block of lots, there clumps or

G. A. Sewall to Fannie Fell, March 15, 1909.
 Fell to his parents, Nov. 17, 1833. The settlements were built in the edges of the groves, he says, in some places extending two miles into the plain. "As the settlements move out into the prairie, people will turn their attention to the cultivation of the forest trees. This in some neighborhoods has already been done."



rows of trees marked the land that Fell owned.

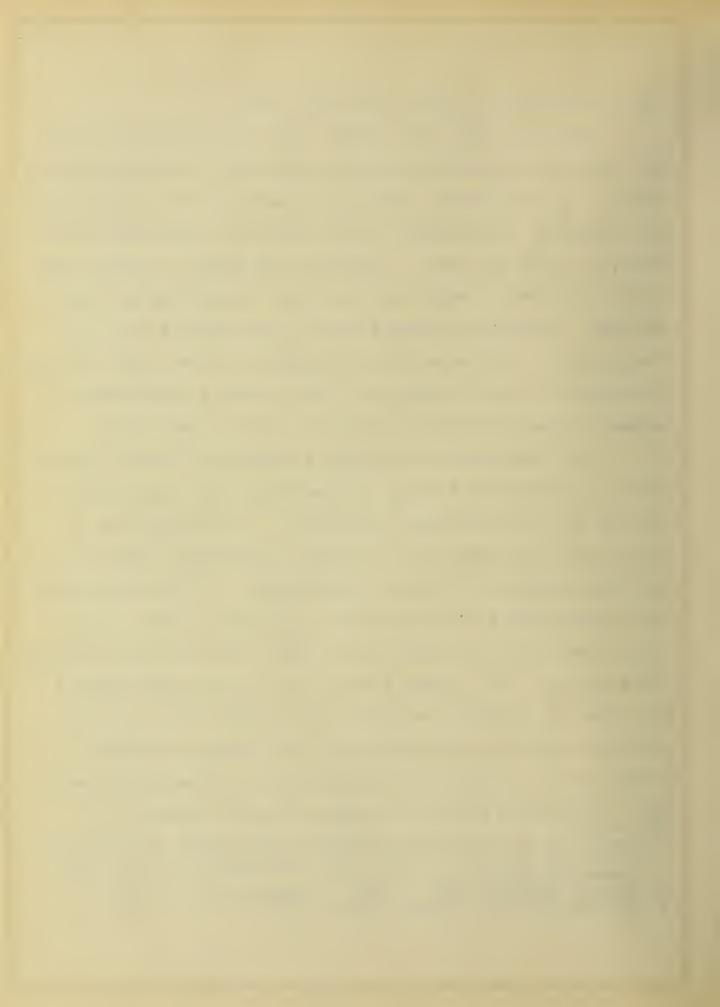
But at no other place did Mr. Fell plant trees with quite the loving enthusiasm which he gave to that work in Bloomington and Normal. In the summer of 1856, when visiting in West Philadelphia and Germantown, Pennsylvania, he was especially impressed with the beauty of the trees there. Germantown was shaded by stately old trees, the growth of many years, but West Philadelphia was then a new town, although beautiful by careful and extensive planting.

Vowing that he would make North Bloomington, his own town in Illinois, as beautiful as West Philadelphia, Fell planned a comprehensive scheme of planting, which he put into effect the next year. 1

His first move was to secure a special act from the legislature, to permit the fencing of young trees planted upon open
streets, for their temporary protection. His desire was to
plant double rows along all the streets, in something like the
spacious prodigality of Hadley, Masschusetts. But North Bloomingtion streets were not surveyed upon so generous a scale, and so
only a few streets could have double rows. Even so, twelve thousand
trees were set out in Normal before a single house was erected. The stimulus and example so given, together with the ease of acquisition afforded by the nurseries, made planting a fashion.
People vied with each other in making their private grounds beautiful. They quoted Mr. Fell's version of an old couplet:

¹⁾ Lewis, who tells this anecdote of Mr. Fell (<u>Life</u>, 54), was with him during the drive through West Philadelphia when this resolution took form.

 ²⁾ Laws of Illinois, 1857, I, 509. Approved Feb. 13, 1857.
 3) Pantagraph, May 27, 1857; July 26, 1865.



"He who plants a tree (and takes care of it)

Does something for posterity."

and acted upon its suggestion. Bloomington had already become known as the "Evergreen City," and Normal came to share in the name. But evergreens do not attain a permanent growth in prairie soil, and of late years the greater part of the conifers so enthusiastically planted by that generation, have given way to the more adaptable maples and elms.1

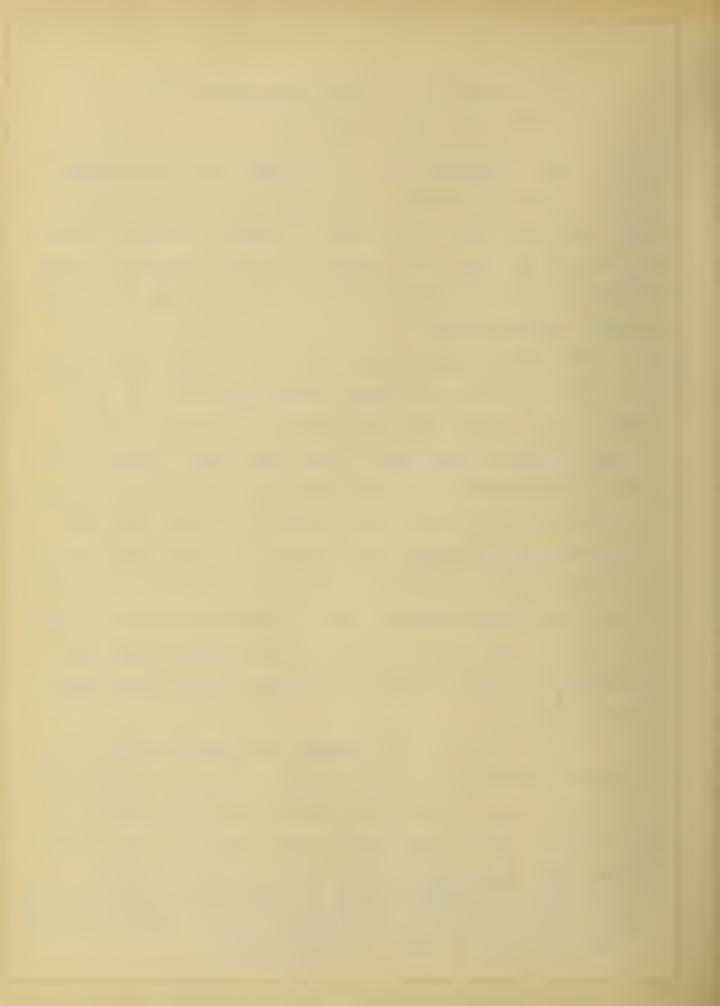
Many of the trees planted were from Mr. Fell's own nurseries. Unsold lots were utilized as branch nurseries, while the eighteen acres of Fell Park were planted in a permanent grove.

Mr. Fell personally supervised all planting, and it is due to his great and loving care that of the trees suited to Illinois conditions scarcely one has died in the half century since their planting.

The original twelve thousand were increased to thirty-five thousand before many years. It is notable that long before the transplanting of large trees became a common feat, he invented a variety of cart which could be used for this purpose, and full-grown trees were transplanted in Normal to beautify the homes of those who wanted results quickly.²

From the first, Mr. Fell assumed the responsibility of beautifying the grounds of the normal school. He wanted to have planted in the grounds every tree that would flourish in central Illinois, that the normal campus might become a place for the study of

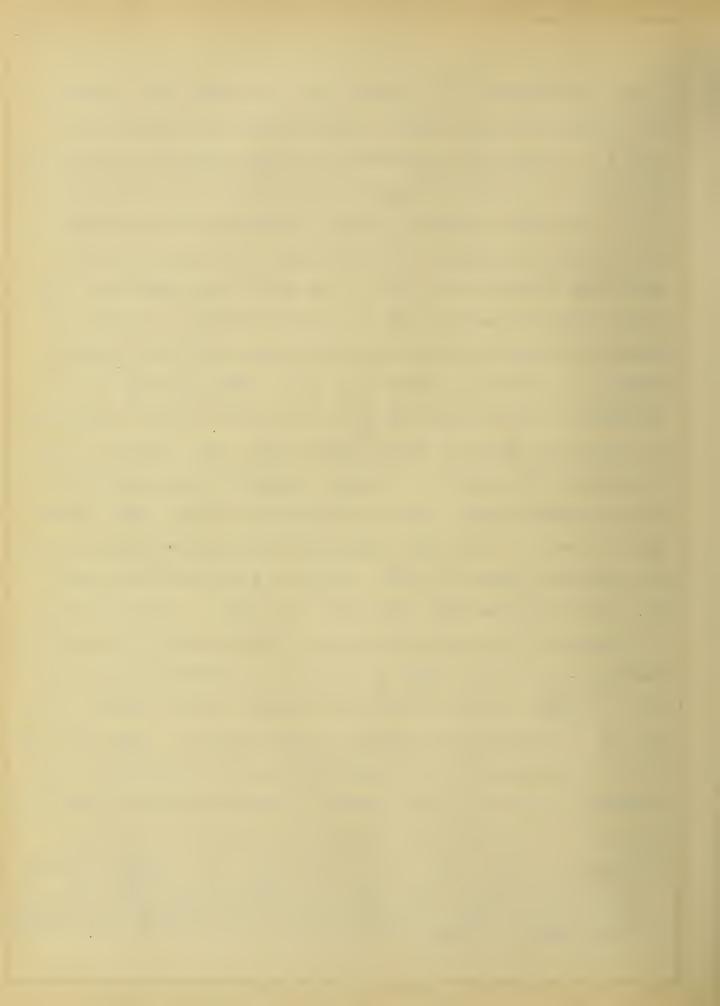
¹⁾ Henry Shaw, "Evergreens," in Pantagraph of July 19, 1854.
2) Lewis Life, 55. Raymond Buchan, of Osman, Illinois, set out most of the trees under Fell's direction. "He was the best man I ever knew," said Buchan of him. Pantagraph, May 27, 1857; John Dodge, "Concerning Jesse W. Fell," in Fell Memorial.



botany and forestry. He insisted, at a time when expert advice upon aesthetic matters was not highly valued, that the grounds should be planned by a professional landscape gardener, and secured the services of William Saunders of Philadelphia for this purpose.1

The rather elaborate plans of Saunders were not carried out by the board of education during the first hard years, when the school was struggling for life. Year after year passed, and the campus remained almost as bare as in the beginning. Finally, to assure the realization of his hopes and plans, Mr. Fell became a member of the board of education in 1866, remaining until 1872. He secured, with the cooperation of interested friends, the passage of a law which went into effect February 29, 1867, relative to the planting of the campus. This act included an appropriation of three thousand dollars, and with the prospect of this cash capital he set to work. The entire campus was subsoiled and plowed during the spring and summer of 1867. Before his official work began, Mr. Fell had planted some trees upon the campus. The next year, 1470 ornamental trees were set out, and 107 more the following year. Saunder's plan was followed as closely as circumstances would per-In 1870, patches of oats and potatoes yielded a small income mit. for use in defraying the expenses of this planting. Even with this help, the appropriation was insufficient, and the work had to be completed at Mr. Fell's own expense. Having completed as nearly as possible, the work which he regarded as peculiarly his own, he

¹⁾ Saunders to Fell, Oct. 15, Oct. 29, 1858. Mr. Saunders advised that a nursery be started upon the grounds, a plan that was carried out partly. The charge for the planting plans was sixty five dollars. Illinois Superintendent Public Instruction, Reports 2) Public Laws of Illinois, 1867, p. 21. (II, 403-408.



resigned from the board.1

In 1885 he became interested in the efforts of Dr. Stennett of the North Western railroad to induce railroad companies to plant trees for ties. The more scientific control of the supply of wood to railroads had been, years before, a hobby of his own. Mr. M. G. Kerr of St. Louis, who was also interested in the project, asked him to write for the forthcoming report of the bureau of forestry, which Kerr hoped to make of commercial value. So far as k mwn, Mr. Fell did not write the article requested, probably on account of the condition of his health. 3

His interest in trees led to his friendship with Henry Shaw of St. Louis. For Jesse Fell alone, it was said, would this rigid Presbyterian Puritan open his famous garden on the Sabbath. Then the two men would walk around together, admiring new or particularly fine specimens, and discussing varieties and culture. Sometimes Mr. Fell took his son Henry with him upon these week-ed visits to St. Louis.4

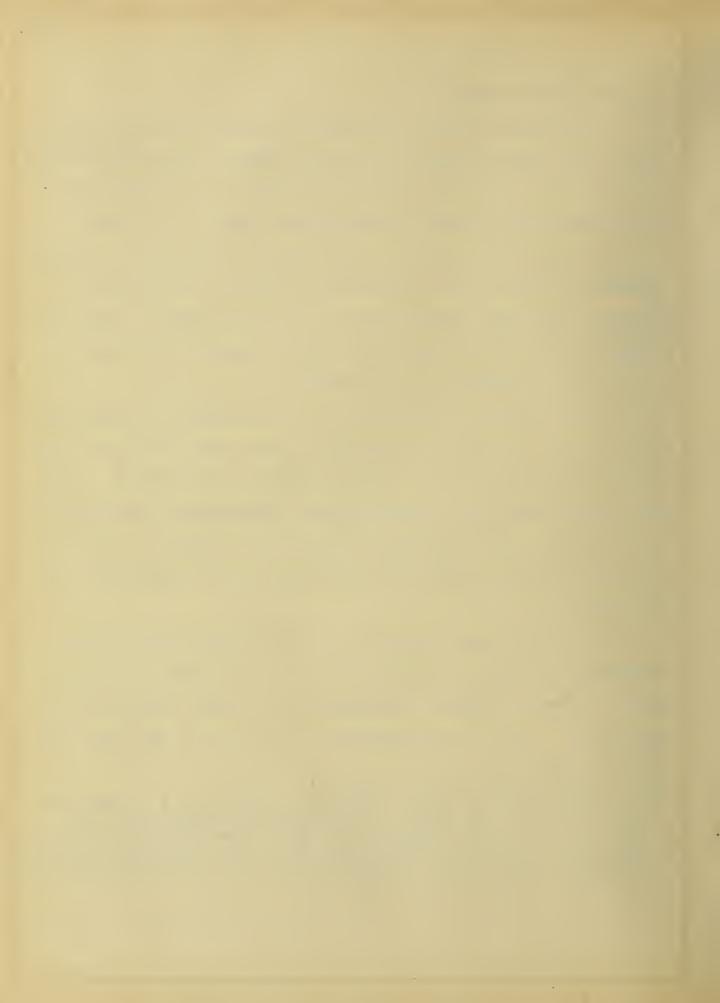
Mr. Fell's last extensive venture in real estate was so essentially tree-planting enterprise that it may best be related here. In 1869 a number of Bloomington men became interested in Iowa lands. As the representative of this group of men, Mr. Fell

2) 0. H. Lee to Fell, July 4, 1853.

4) Henry Fell, interview, May 31, 1913.

¹⁾ Lewis Life, 56.

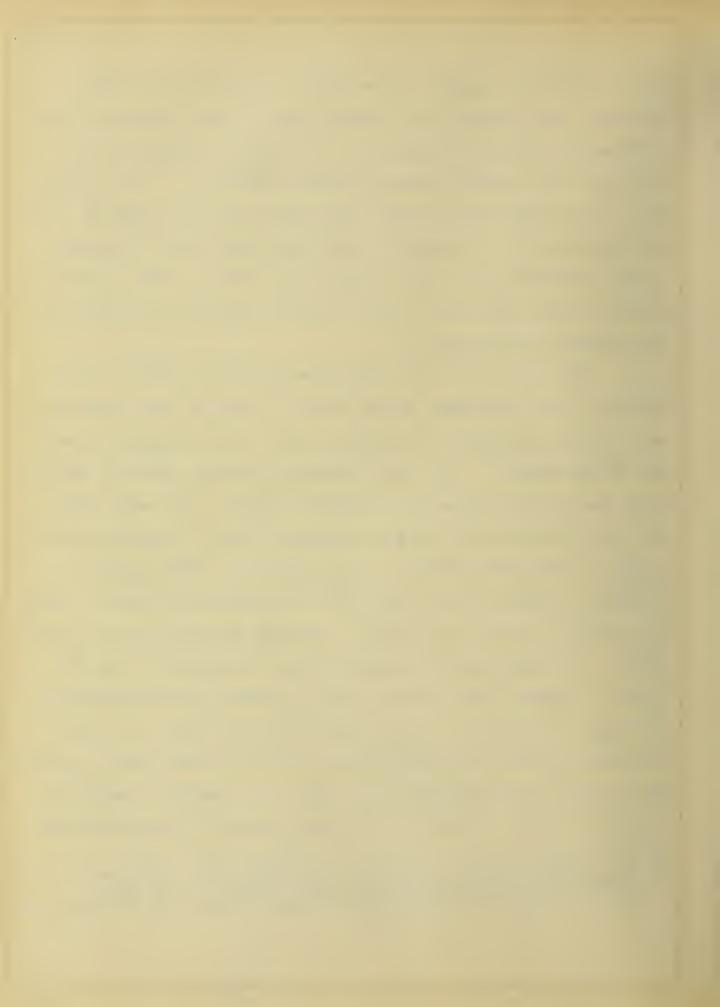
³⁾ M. G. Kerr to Fell, Sept. 22, 1885. Theletter is accompanied by "A Circular addressed to presidents of Railways, with the request that you may express to me your views and experience on the uphill road of interesting Railroad men in matters of Forest Culture," and a set of "Inquiries addressed to Railway Managers."



went to Iowa that summer, and selected a tract of about forty sections (over twenty-five thousand acres) in Lyon County in the northwestern corner of the state. Without improvements, this section of the country was exceedingly attractive. "In thirtytwo of the thirty-seven states comprising our union," said Mr. Fell in describing it, "I have never beheld so large a body of surpassingly beautiful prairie as is here to be found. There is absolutely no waste land, and scarce a quarter-section not affording an admirable building-site."1

The plan of the proprietors was to survey a town in the center of their holdings, and to start the work of improvement on each farm by breaking a few acres of land, and by planting trees and willow hedge. The town was named Larchwood, and the settlement came to be known as the Larchwood Colony. For many years, Mr. Fell devoted much time each spring and fall to personal supervision of improvement there. As in Normal and other places in Illinois, he did not trust the work to hirelings, but superintended the setting of the trees himself, sometimes helping with the actual labor. The improvements accomplished were unusual, to say the In May, 1873, Fell set out one hundred thousand trees and cuttings, distributed through eight sections of land. At that time one hundred and fifty thousand trees had already been set out, and a tract of forty acres in the center of a number of sections insured a "start" of ten acres of broken ground to every immigrant

¹⁾ Lewis Life, 104.
2) The original company included, besides Mr. Fell, Charles W. Holder, John Magoun, R. E. Williams, A. Burr, E. H. Rood, Richard Edwards, Milner Brown and Daniel Brown. Lewis Life, 104.

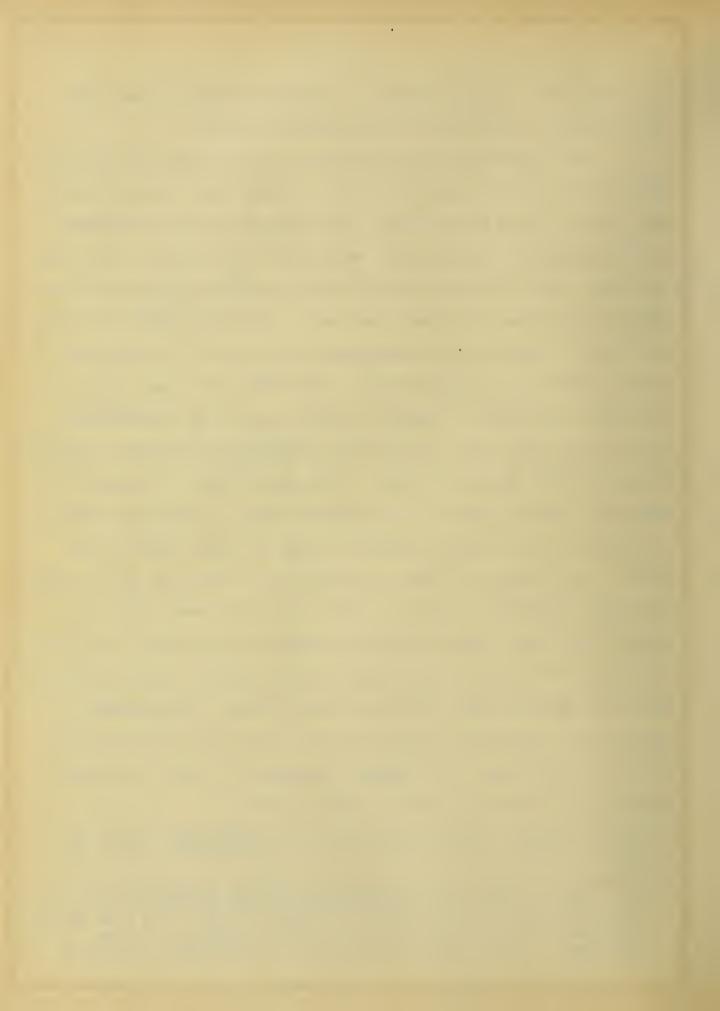


who purchased a quarter-section. Larchwood farms at that time were selling at from four to six dollars an acre.1

The history of Larchwood serves to illustrate one of Jesse Fell's most notable characteristics. General Gridley, who knew him very well, was wont to say of him that he was never mistaken in his judgment of the ultimate value of a piece of land, but that his eager nature greatly discounted the length of time which would elapse before that value was realized. Imaginative and enthusiastic, full of faith in the development of the West, he calculated upon an increase in value for more rapid than the actual rate of settlement justified. What he thought would be an accomplished fact in ten years, the slowly-moving forces of development realized, perhaps, after thirty or forty. Larchwood, with its unusual advantages, did not grow as its promoters hoped it would, and about 1880 the Illinois owners decided to sell what was left of the tract. At that time, there were about fifty miles of willow hedge outlining the farms, and many of the trees were from twenty to thirty feet high. White willow, box-elder, white maple, white ash, cottonwood, bass wood, black walnut, honey-locust, chestnut, European and American larch, white and Scotch pines, osage orange, arbor vitae, Norway and native spruces, were among the trees and shrubs then growing. The Catalpa Speciosa, Mr. Fell's favorite protege, was a feature of the village planting.2

¹⁾ An account by a settler appeared in the <u>Pantagraph</u>, April 12, 1872. One by a settler in a neighboring vicinity, April 25, 1872.

²⁾ Dr. John A. Warder, in the American Journal of Forestry for Oct. 1882. The article was reprinted as a circular. Mr. Henry Augustine, long a prominent nurseryman of Normal, has told of his first meeting with Mr. Fell and of his championing of the Speciosa. A shy, awkward German boy, seeking his fortune in



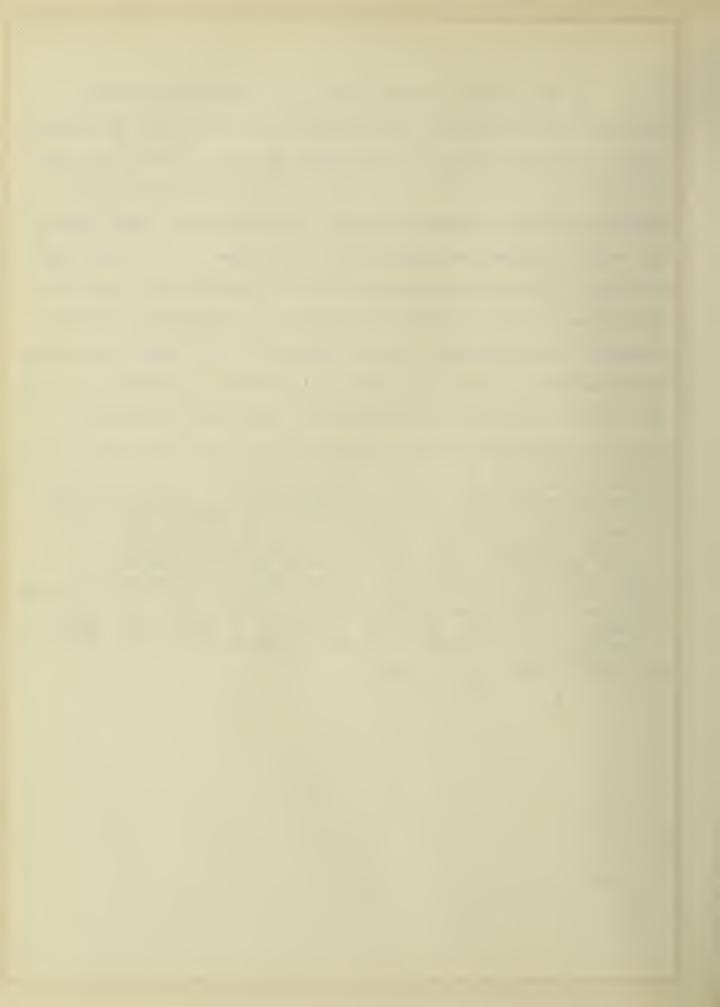
An Englishman, Richard Sykes, who dealt extensively in American lands, purchased the Larchwood farms, and came to America with his brother and a party of friends in April, 1882, to see the estate he had acquired. He had previously brought out a pamphlet concerning Larchwood, and after inspecting the farms took up the work of further development with enthusiasm. He sent George E. Brown, an experienced forester from Scotland, to take charge of the groves, and sent saplings for planting. Delighted to find a successor so in sympathy with his ideas, Fell long kept up friendly relations with Mr. Sykes and various Larchwood residents. As late as 1886, he was still in correspondence concerning some of the titles to Larchwood property, which had been left unrecorded. S

the new country, Mr. Fell called him in from the road one day, and had a long talk with him in his office. Finding that he loved trees, Mr. Fell explained to him the difference between the worthless and harmful varieties of the catalpa, and the useful Speciosa. He showed him the slight difference in the seed which is the only distinguishing mark in appearance.

Mr. Augustine in later years became, himself, an extensive grower and dealer in the Speciosa. Henry Augustine, interviews.

¹⁾ The sale took place in 1881. Sykes to Fell, Nov. 26, 1881; March 10, 19, 1882; March 10, 1884; Aug. 4, 1886; Close Brothers to Fell, Jan. 26, 1882; Newspaper clipping of Jan. 19, 1881, in Scrapbook.

²⁾ Sykes to Fell, Aug. 4, 1886.



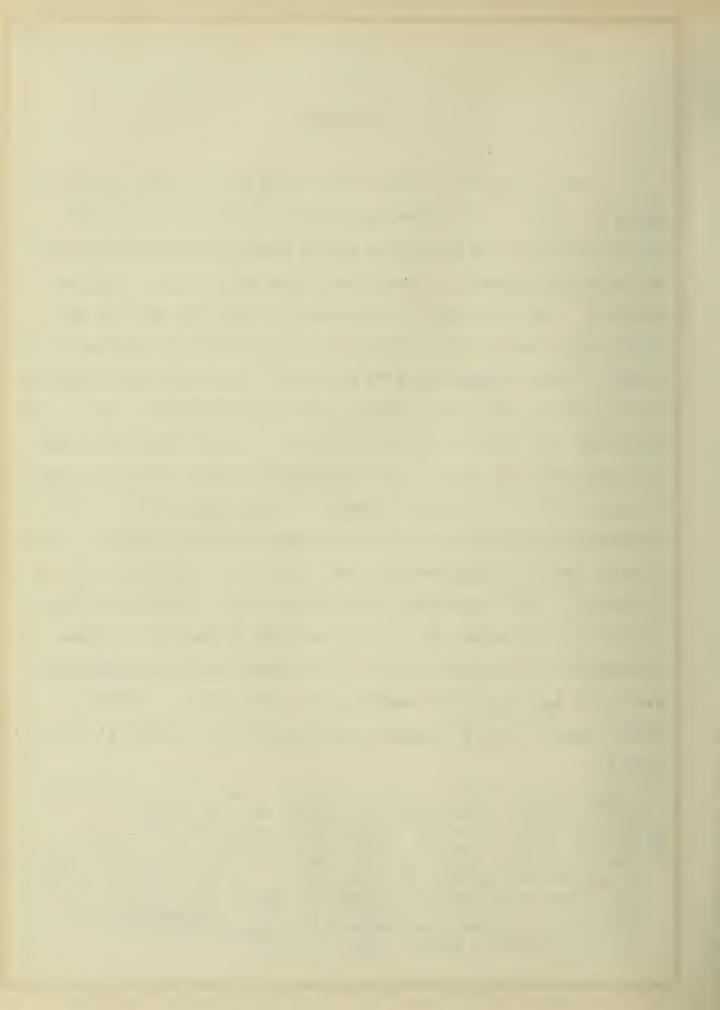
IIX

Last Years.

His unsuccessful efforts for David Davis, were, as has been said, Mr. Fell's last active participation in politics. After that, although still interested in the issues of the day, he did no campaigning, save for some local projects in which he was interested. He continued to correspond with men who were in the field, and occasionally, upon request, expressed his opinions in the Logan, engaged in 1874 with the formulating and passage of the Resumption Act, wrote to him upon finance; Wentworth and Murray discussed the election of 1876 with him. 1 As the faithful friend of Judge Davis, he seems to have arranged for his election to the Senate in 1877. He induced Palmer, the then incumbent, to withdraw from the race, and to throw the weight of his influence to the side of Davis. Logan was defeated, and Cullom became governor of Illinois. 2 Any injustice still called forth a spirited defense of the person wronged, as in the case of S. W. Moulton, who was accused, by political enemies, of having had secession sympathies; and in the campaign which was waged in 1877, through the local press, against severe corporal punishments at the Soldiers' Orphans' Home. 3

¹⁾ Logan to Fell, Feb. 16, 1874; Jan. 11, 1875; Wentworth to Fell, July 3, 1876; Bronson Murray to Fell, Dec. 18, 1876.

³⁾ Fell to Palmer, Jan. 15, 1877. Endorsement by Fell.
3) Moulton to Fell, Jan. 9, 1884; Davis to Fell, Feb. 4, 1882; Jan. 22, 1885; Oglesby to Fell, March 17, 1884; Sept. 18, 1886; J. B. Foraker to Fell, Jan. 26, 1887. This last letter is in reference to an abortive attempt to secure the nomination of Robert T. Lincoln for president, in 1888. Pantagraph, Jan. 4, 1884; Fell, "Oglesby and Logan," in Chicago Tribune, Jan. 13, 1879; Bloomington Leader, July 23, 1877.



Although approaching age and reduced circumstances prevented his taking the leading part in public affairs that it had been his wont to exercise in former years, Fell was still active and influential. He entertained a project of securing funds to buy Fell Park for a public pleasure ground, but was unable for some reason to push the matter to success. He was interested in the extension of the public library, and made such subscription as his then limited means would permit.

Business was not by any means given up. Although he had always made money easily, he had lost as well, and had given much away. He was no hoarder; money in itself was nothing to him. He told Eberhart once that he liked to make it, and enjoyed spending it for the benefit of other people, many of whom didn't know how to take care of themselves. The remark shows his somewhat paternal attitude toward society, and explains many of his projects. Withdrawing from the larger enterprises of his prime, in his old age Mr. Fell bent his energies toward securing property which might be depended upon to yield an income to his family after his death.

Some land he owned in the outskirts of Normal was planted to straw-

¹⁾ Thomas Slade, in clipping from <u>Bloomington Leader</u>, May, 1887.

Mr. Slade says that Mr. Fell wrote him concerning this scheme a short time before his death, even proposing, "in his zeal, out of his narrow means," to give on thousand dollars himself. He had always been interested in parks, and had induced Messrs.

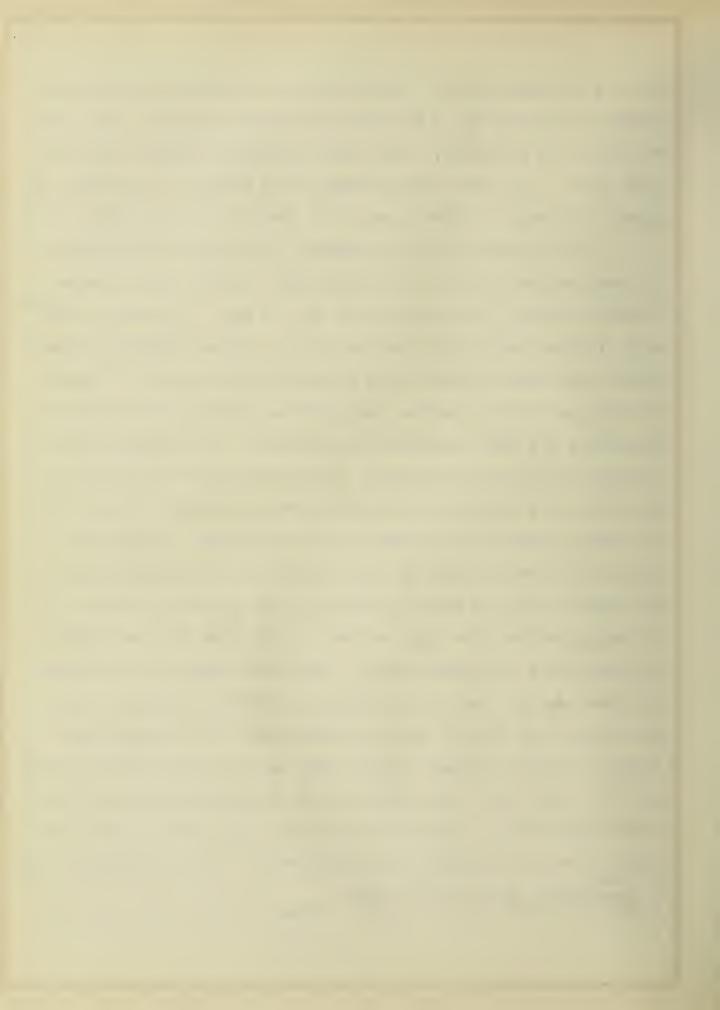
Davis, Flagg and Allen to present to Bloomington, in 1857, the little park which was named Franklin Square. Franklin Price in the <u>Advocate</u>, April 21, 1894. The article suggested that the idea be carried out by the people as a memorial to Fell. It followed a suggestion in the <u>Leader</u> of April 28, that a monument be erected at public expense. Both proposals were well received but for want of energetic pushing came to naught; and it has remained for a later generation to build a suitable public monument.



berries and larger fruit, and from this he derived an incalculable amount of pleasure and a satisfactory return in money. Fell Park was sold to a syndicate, which after his death divided it up into city lots. Its great beauty became but a memory to the people of Normal, although the fine trees still shade that part of the town.

His daughters Alice and Fannie, the latter an instructor in Greek and Latin in the University High School, then a famous classical school, were with him in his old age. He kept in close with friends, among whom Jonathan Turner, Richard Edwards, Lawrence Weldon, and John H. Bryant were perhaps nearest to him. Henry, the only one of his sons who had grown to manhood, had removed to Minnesota; his other daughters were married. His grandchildren, children of his beloved daughter Eliza and William O. Davis, who was also his especially close friend, were a delight to him; and he took the greatest interest in their education. When not in school, they were usually at their grandfather's, keeping store in the playhouse he had built years before for his own children, or listening to him as he sang to them or told them stories, working away among his trees and shrubs. They took long drives with him into the country, and planned with him wonderful things to do in the future; for when he was an old man Jesse Fell retained that fresh and buoyant forward-looking that had made him strong to accomplish in his youth, and passed it on to those who had their lives still before them. And with these family ties, he kept up, later than any secular activity, his church work. Church attendance was

¹⁾ Pantagraph, March 18, 25, 1888.
2) Turner to Fell, Jan. 1, 1879. Bryant to Fell, Feb. 25, 1885.

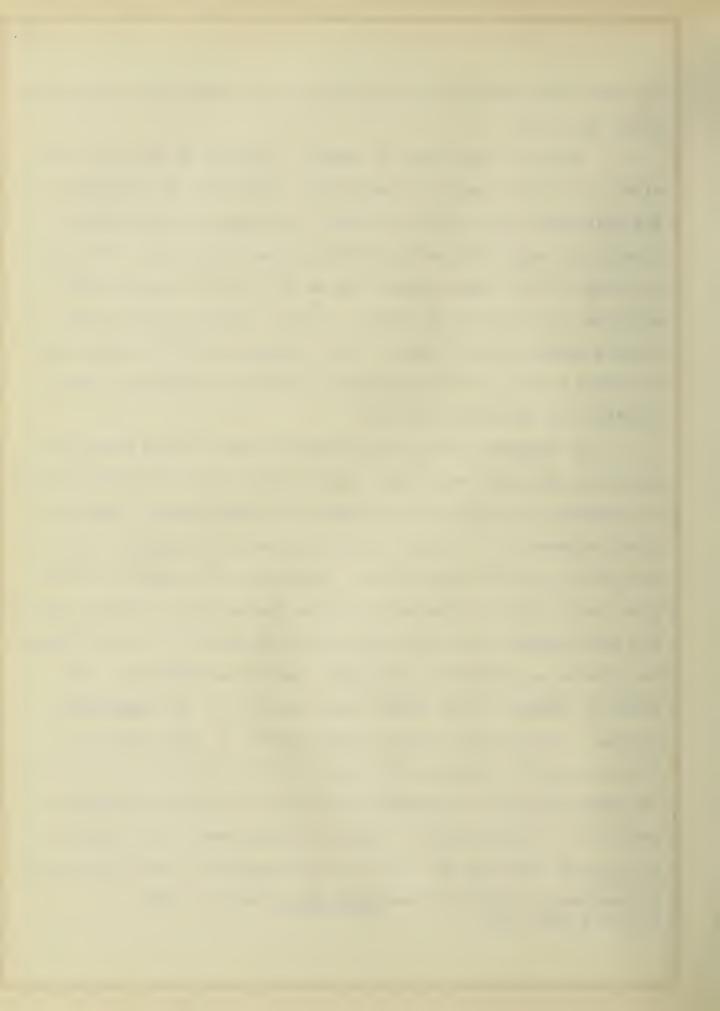


the last thing given up when finally he was compelled to stop going about among men.

Some time was spent in travel. In 1874 he made the last visit to his old home in Pennsylvania. He drank of the spring in the milk-house, sat by the fireside, and stayed to tea with the hospitable people who had bought his father's old farm. He spent the night with R. Henry Carter, as he had the last night before starting for the West, in 1828. In later years he took, with various members of his family, trips through the West, which was a new world to him. He was planning a winter in California when overtaken by his last illness.1

In ripening years a keen sense of humor, which during his more strenuous days was either subordinated to more important things or forgotten by others in the memory of accomplishment, found frequest expression. It crept into conversation, brightened letters, even led to gentle Quaker jokes. These he could take as well as give, as a couple of newspaper notices, quoted by Mr. Lewis, prove. The firs appeared on January 28, 1874, and read: "J. W. Fell mourns the loss of an umbrella, left in the court room yesterday. He would be pleased if the finder would leave it at the Pantagraph office." The sequel came the next day: "J. W. Fell desires to return thanks for the generous supply of umbrellas left for him at the Pantagraph office yesterday in answer to his advertisement of one lost. Although most of these offerings are better adapted to dry weather than wet, Mr. Fell is not disposed to look a gift horse

¹⁾ Newspaper clipping in the <u>Scrap Book</u>, Sept. 8, 1884. 2) Lewis Life, 104.



in the mouth, but accepts the varied assortment with the feeling that it is pleasant to be remembered in the hour of one's distress."

It was a few years later that a young girl invited him to a dance. The reply was as follows:1

Normal, Jan. 1880.

Miss Florence Richardson:

The fair invites! and so, you bet, Your invitation I'll accept. But I must tell you in advance My Quaker foot it will not dance. A thousand times I have lamented That Fox and Penn were so demented As to proscribe what all can see With half an eye, is poetry; If not in words, in what is better, -In motion, life, spirit, letter. Yes, if I could, I'd skip and prance In all the ecstasy of dance; For I am young, and supple too, I'm not quite three-score ten and two. But what's the use? My education's So neglected I'd scare the nation! So goodbye dance, it's not for me, As you and all can plainly see.

But, what of that? I shall propose
To play a game of dominoes;
And if perchance you're so inclined

¹⁾ Jan. 24, 1880. Newspaper clipping in Scrapbook, and manuscript

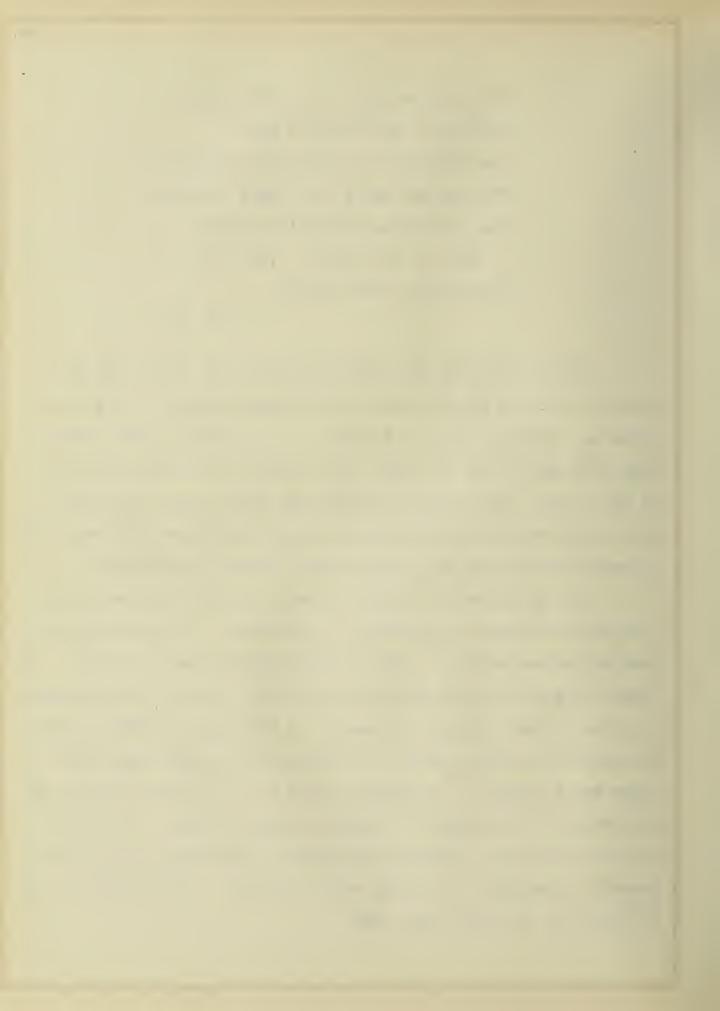


Will play a game of mind with mind,
Holding to each other's view
The things of life, both old and new;
The ups and downs, the weals and woes
That follow man, where're he goes.

Meet at the hotel? Very well,
There you'll find yours,

J. W. Fell.

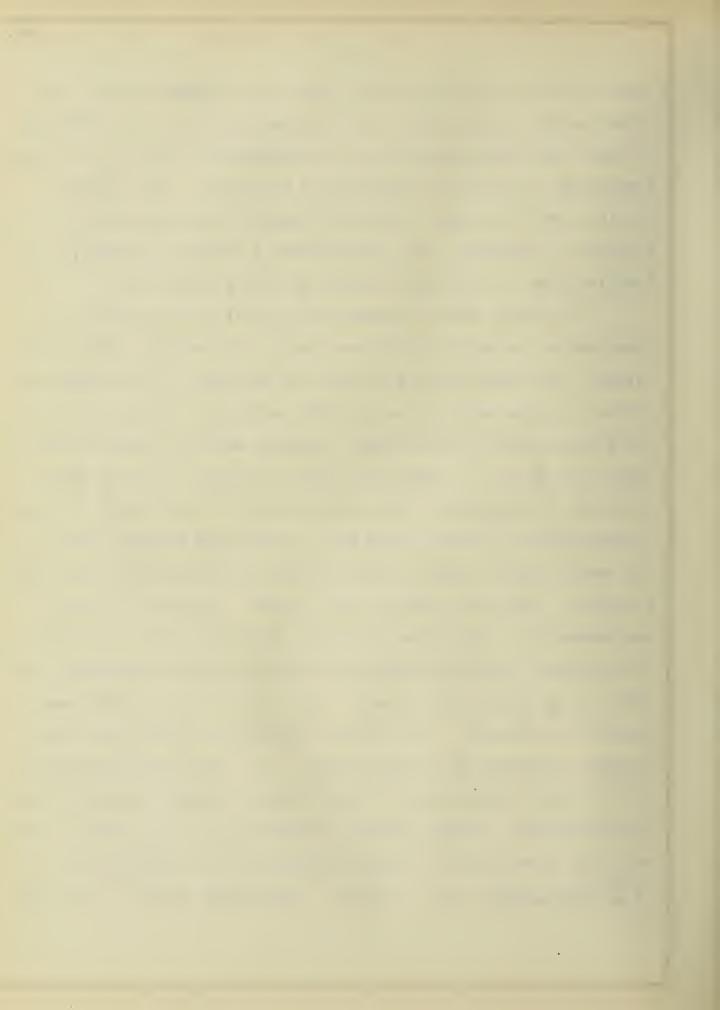
These instances will suffice to show the quality of the homor in which he met the days of declining strength. His last years were happy as they were busy. "I was glad to know," wrote John H. Bryant to him in 1885, "that you had got beyond all fears of the future, that terrible burden that weighs down with gloom, misery, and wretched forebodings so many of our race, and especially innocent children who are reared under orthodox instruction."



home in a very serious condition, made worse perhaps by worry over normal school affairs, then in a critical condition. Dr. William A. Elder, the family physician, in consultation with Dr. C. R. Parke, pronounced it a case of congestion of the brain. For a week he lay in a comotose sleep. Rousing himself finally, he spoke to members of his family, and repeated Pope's "Universal Prayer," a favorite poem. His death occurred on February 25, 1887.1

The usual marks of respect and regret at the death of a prominent and beloved citizen were paid to his memory. letters, and flowers were sent from far and near. The newspapers printed eulogies and reviewed his life and work. Town councils, the Bloomington Bar Association, churches, schools, passed resolutions of respect. A lodge of Knights of Pythias, shortly after organized in Bloomington, was named for him. The funeral, on the twenty-eighth of February, was held in the large assembly hall of the normal school, since no church could accomodate the crowds that attended. The public schools were closed. Business in Normal was suspended. The aisles, corridors and stairs, and the steps of the normal school building were filled with silent mourners who could not find room in the hall. The front of the platform was banked with flowers. Rev. Richard Edwards, his old friend and neighbor, preached the funeral sermon. Mr. Fell had selected him for this duty, pledging him to the briefest possible account of his accomplishment, a pledge which Dr. Edwards kept at the cost of some criticism from those who did not understand the circumstances.

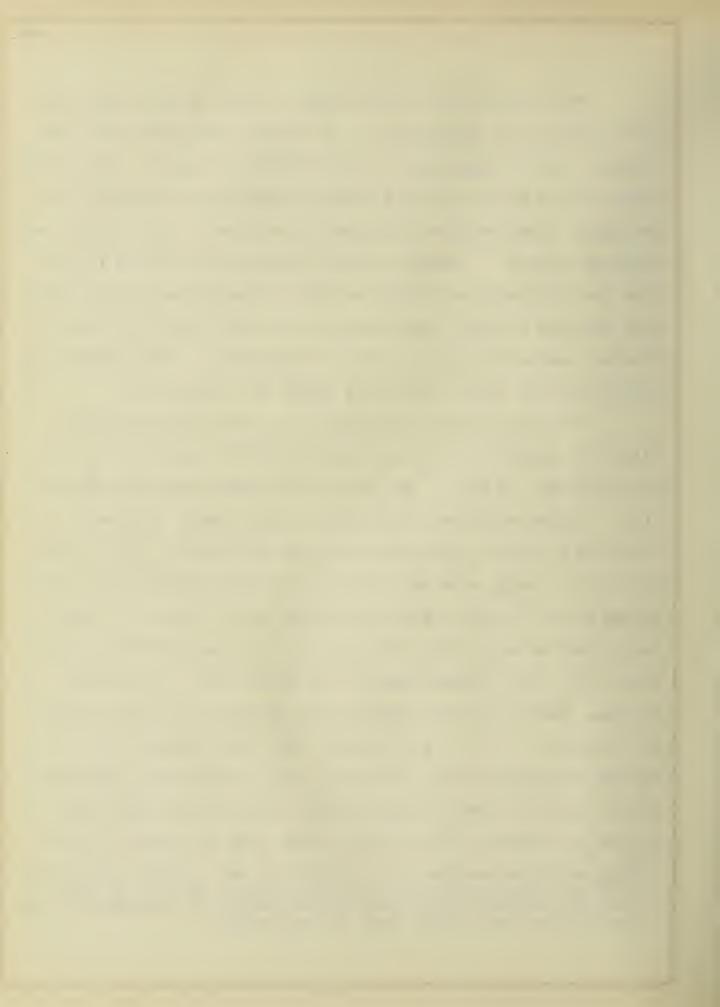
¹⁾ Chicago Tribune, Feb. 26, 1887. Pantagraph, March 15, 19, 1887.



The service over, the procession formed for the long drive to the cemetery in Bloomington. No tribute could have been more eloquent than the appearance of the funeral procession. The country roads were as bad as Illinois country roads can be in March, but carriages, carts and heavy farm wagons had come in from all the surrounding country. Shabby and smart vehicles alternated in the line that followed the hearse; and the procession was so long that when the last mourners were leaving the normal school, the first ones had reached the court house in Bloomington. The Bloomington school children joined those from Normal at this point.

There was sincere mourning, for in death men pay eager tribute to qualities which are accepted without appreciation, or quite ignored, in life. Mr. Fell had not been unappreciated in life. He had won from men the only thing he asked of them, a trust and good-will answering to that he bore them. It is doubtful if those among whom he lived had any adequate idea of the part he had played in public affairs for many years, and few of them understood the magnitude of the work of development which he, and others like him, accomplished for the Middle West. But those personal qualities which distinguished him among men, all men saw and honored. "It is a good thing," said Judge Ewing of him, in voicing this appreciation," to have known one man whose life was without spot or blemish; against whose honor no man every spoke; who had no skeleton in his closet; whose life was open as the day

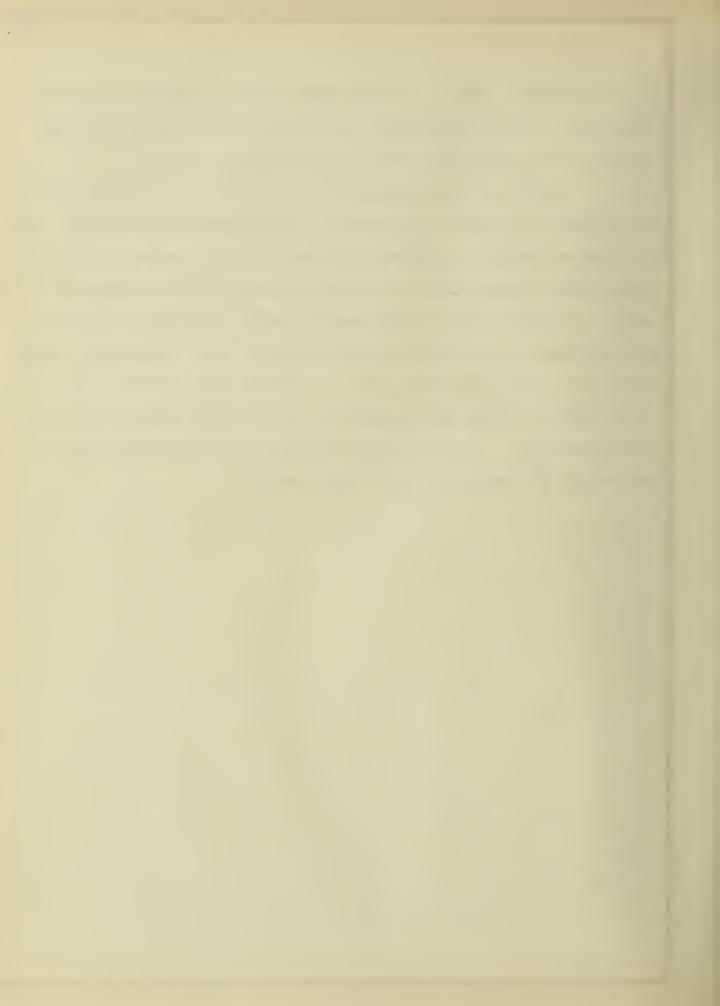
¹⁾ The telephone was then just coming into use, and the one connecting the court house with the normal school was used on this occasion by Henry Augustine, who had charge of arrangements, and who related the details given to the writer.



and whose death comes to a whole community as a personal sorrow."

And John W. Cook, who knew him well, said of him at the memorial service held in his own church on the seventh of March:

"In that picture gallery of the soul we call memory, there will always be a gracious presence. The personality is vivid; the outlines are sharply defined; the face is full of earnest purpose; every line is suggestive of tireless energy and the radiance of hope. A simple, honest, unostentious man, yet wherever he has gone good deeds have marked his footsteps. As if by magic, stately trees have sprung from the path over which he has walked. In their gracious shade generations yet unborn shall mention his name with gratitude. Institutions whose only aim is helpfulness to man record his generosity and public spirit."



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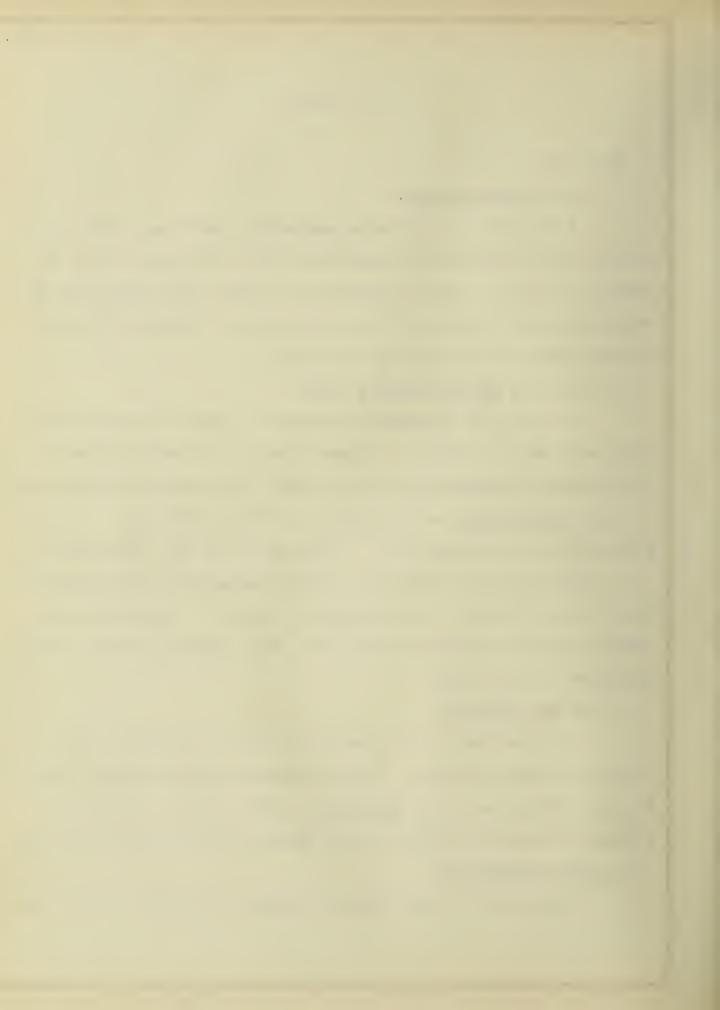
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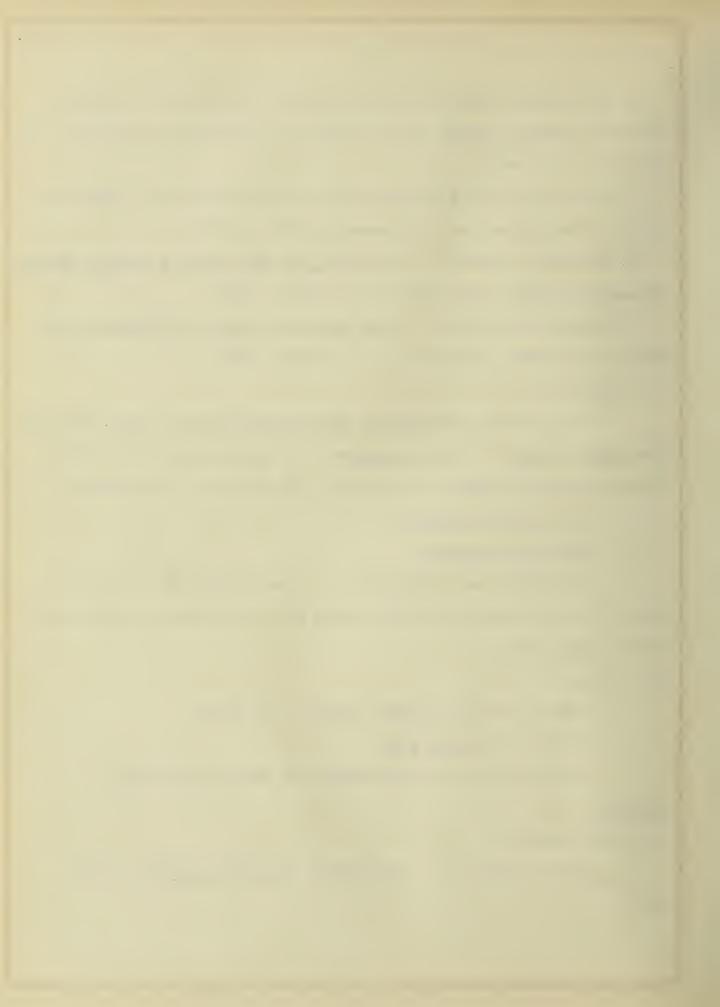
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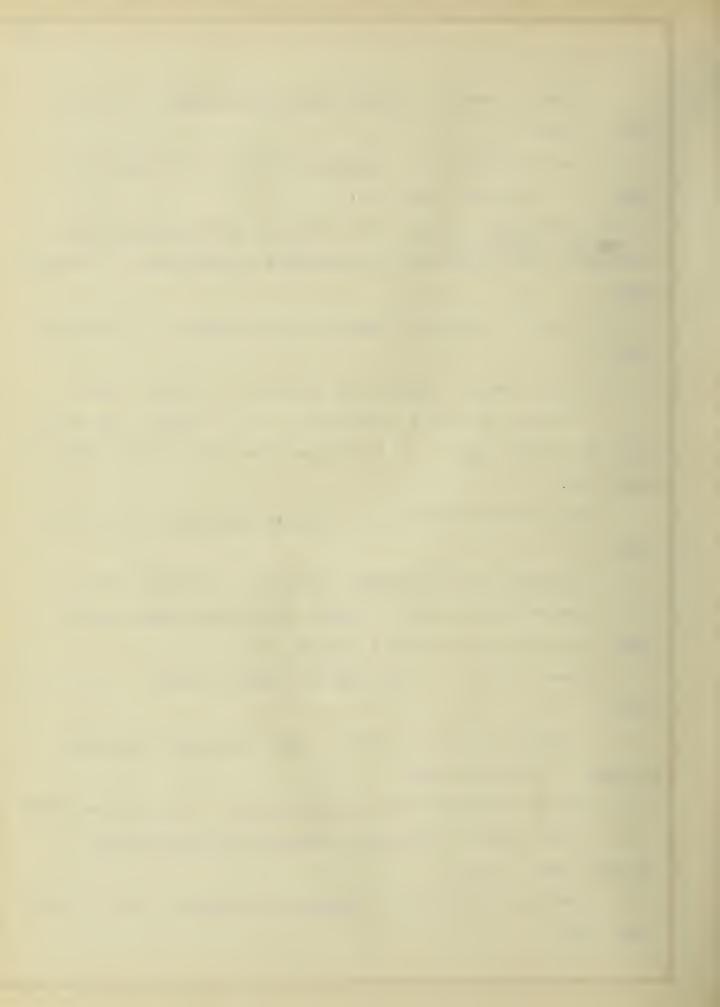
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